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Democratic Design: Theory and Practice

by

Mirela Doina Duculescu



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History of Art, Design and Visual Culture

Department of Art and Design

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2008

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Democratic Design: Theory and Practice

Submitted by Mirela Doina Duculescu in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Abstract

This research investigates the theoretical concept of “democratic design” as it appeared at the end of the nineteenth century within the European roots of socialist thinking and, then, spread into the United States. This research also examines the practical approach to democratic design that developed in two different socio-political systems starting with the early 1940s and a large part of the Cold War framework (1945-1970): the “liberal democracy” of capitalist America and the “socialist democracy” of the communist German Democratic Republic. This thesis argues that the theoretical base for democratic design shares common features in a capitalist democratic system and in a communist one. Case studies are discussed: the democratic design approach of Charles and Ray Eames in America (focusing especially on their plywood chairs manufactured by Herman Miller), and domestic furniture designed by Selman Selmanagić, Franz Ehrlich, and Rudolf Horn and produced by the People-Owned German Workshops in Hellerau, East Germany.

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Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century, the notion of “democratic design” was generally used for simple, good quality and low-priced objects made for a “broad audience” within Europe and North America.¹ Later, by the 1940s, “democratic design” had become more closely associated with industrial mass-production and with the accessibility of goods for the masses.

At the height of the Cold War, the United States, as a capitalist democracy, and Soviet Russia, as a communist dictatorship, confronted each other ideologically and technologically in the area of material culture, displaying the best products of their economic systems (washing machines, suburban houses, chairs, cars, and so forth). The International Trade Exhibition² held in Moscow in July 1959 marked the first Cold War public encounter of the two political super powers that had dramatically changed the face of the world after the Second World War. Both states used architects, designers, artists, interpreters, and ordinary families to show off their authority and strength. The film

¹ Wendy Kaplan, “America: the Quest for Democratic Design.” *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004) 247.

² The American National Exhibition in Moscow (ANEM, 1959) was called “A corner of America” by then-President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961) and contained mass-produced domestic goods, photography, fashion, art pieces and a multi-screen film projection. Emphasizing the complexity and diversity of American life, the Cold War government used architecture as a propaganda tool in order to endorse capitalist system in contrast to Soviet communism. See Cristina Maria Carbone, “Building Propaganda: Architecture at the American National Exhibition in Moscow of 1959,” diss., U of California, 2001. The United States Information Agency also used photography as a means of propaganda according to the memories of Eric J. Sandeen, “*The Family of Man in Moscow*,” *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995) 125-53.

Glimpses of the U.S. A. by the American designers Charles and Ray Eames, commissioned by the American government, tried to convey to the Russian audience an “accurate” image of industry and typical American life. This film, about mass-produced consumer goods resembling the ones on display in the American pavilion, was projected on multiple screens at the exhibition. Part of this great event was the unexpected face-off between Soviet Prime-Minister Nikita Khrushchev and American Vice-President Richard Nixon that came to be known as “The Kitchen Debate.” In the American pavilion, a geodesic dome designed by Richard Buckminster Fuller, the two leaders debated the virtues of the American way of life, focusing on the kitchen space of the American suburban model home. Nixon defended the American system, designed to take advantage of new inventions and new techniques, claiming that “We hope to show our diversity and our right to choose,” which he placed in opposition to communist Russia where, he asserted, decisions are “made at the top by government officials who say that all homes should be built in the same way.”³ Khrushchev accused the Americans of producing things that “are not needed in life” and that are not conceived to last as long as Russian counterparts: “We build firmly. We build for our children and grandchildren.”⁴ Politicians in both “democracies” agreed that their national systems built homes and produced domestic objects in order to provide a good life for the industrial worker who

³ Richard M. Nixon, and Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, “Richard M. Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev. Kitchen Debate, or, Sokolniki Summit. U.S. Exhibition Hall. International Trade Exposition. Moscow. Unedited Footage. 1959.” *New York Times* 25 July 1959: 1+. 20 September 2007 <www.turnerlearning.com/cnn/coldwar/sputnik/sput_re4.html>.

⁴ Richard M. Nixon, and Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev “Richard M. Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev. Kitchen Debate” 1+.

was the representative citizen of each nation. Nixon talked about diversity and choice while Khrushchev addressed the ideas of utility and durability of products. Their disagreement on ideas, interestingly, was contradictory to their common aims. In fact, both politicians were advocating for technological advancement and industrial production of goods made affordable to as many people as possible. The concept of “democratic design” which is, in fact, what Khrushchev and Nixon were describing, refers to the mass production, accessibility, and wide-spread reception of low-priced, good-quality design objects for everyday use.

The notion of “democratic design” is not monosemous. It is a construct which developed in different locations and it has changed over time. Nonetheless, it is often written about as a single type of design, collapsing its inner complexity. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the ideological complexity of the concept of “democratic design” within the two contradictory economic and political structures -- liberal capitalism, as in the case of America, and communist socialism, as in the case of East Germany.⁵

⁵ East Germany or the German Democratic Republic was established in 1949, following the Yalta Conference Agreement at the end of the Second World War. Held in Crimea in February 1945, with the participation of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, the Yalta Conference sealed the postwar Yalta Agreement through which Europe was split into zones of influence; as such, Germany was split in two republics: the capitalist democratic American, French and British occupation of the Western part of Germany (known as the Federal Republic of Germany, *die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) and the communist socialist and military Soviet occupation of Eastern Germany (known as the German Democratic Republic, *die Deutsche Demokratische Republik*). Between 1945 and 1949, Eastern Germany was under the coordination of the *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland* (the Soviet Military Administration in Germany, the SMAD). For more details about the Yalta geopolitics see Alexander Yakovlev, ed., *The Yalta Conference, 1945: Lessons of History* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Pub. House, 1985).

In this thesis I shall argue that the theoretical base for “democratic design” shares common features in a capitalist democratic system and in a communist socialist one. I will examine this with respect to the fact that they differ in their opposing underpinning political ideologies, based on opposing economic structures. Their ideologies, as my discussion will reveal, make “democratic design” one potential choice among many for American designers and the only possibility in the practice of design for East German designers.

I shall confine my study to the period from the early 1940s to the early 1970s, which incorporates part of the Second World War and that part of the Cold War period from the end of the Second World War to the early 1970s, and to two different socio-political and economic systems within that time. This period is highly informed by the military race between the US and the Soviet Union when technology became an important ideological weapon for military industrial design.⁶ McCarthyism and American government anti-Soviet rhetoric in general affected how American people looked at Eastern European communist design; in turn, Russian propaganda against American “imperialism” affected how communist people looked at Western capitalist design.

In this research, I shall look mainly at industrial design products made for everyday use, acknowledging the craft component when it exists as part of designers’ practice. I will discuss the theory and practice of “democratic design” in both sets of

⁶ The Cold War arms race generated a series of nuclear (bombs, missiles) and space-related (the famous Russian *Sputnik* satellite launched on October 4, 1957) military objects as well as other examples of military design (i.e., machines, submarines, planes, clothing, road design, etc.). For further details about the early origins and the global Cold War framework and its military focus see Eduard H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *A Hard and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996).

circumstances, investigating how design professionals addressed this topic. The rationale behind choosing the two systems, which are defined by opposed political and economical structures, is based on their common attribute: mass design stemming from mass production, affordability, quality of products, and mass reception. The capitalist system will be represented by the USA, a democratic social organization with a free market economy and differentiated market segments. American policy in the design field was profit-driven. The situation was complex, however, as there were designers who were more interested in the need-centred aspect of design. The focus here will be on Charles and Ray Eames, who are generally considered to be the most influential professionals in the complex American design scene from the 1950s to 1970s. They are, in some ways, not typical for American design, standing outside the norm driven by economy and profit, since their design thinking is characterized by its focus on good-quality mass production, with affordable prices for people. However, it is precisely for this reason that I concentrate on them in this research: that is, because of their unique “democratic design” philosophy, which functioned successfully in the American system, and the fact that, in spite of this difference, they had a crucial influence on modern American design practice.

The other system I shall examine is that of the DDR (*die Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or the DDR, the German Democratic Republic) as a communist structure. It is a relevant system in order to examine the notion of communist democratic design in regards to its planned economy, five-year plan, and alleged homogenous target -- the working class of the proletariat. A key reason to utilize the DDR, a communist “democracy,” as one of the main structures is represented by Germany’s important position within the European history of design. It is crucial for the understanding of

“democratic” as a design concept to investigate why and how the former DDR made reference to its uneasy linkage with the “capitalist” *Deutscher Werkbund* (the German Work Federation, the DWB) principles and the Bauhaus legacy: a preoccupation with quality industrial design, the issue of standardization, low prices, and mass-produced goods.

Firstly, starting from theories and concepts generated by socialist-related movements, this research aims to trace historically the conceptual roots of “democratic design” and its attributes, contributing to a better understanding of how this concept developed in the history of design. In addition, this study will question if there is a common ideology and a theoretical connection between communist and capitalist design in terms of mass production and reception and equal accessibility to “quality” mass-manufactured goods. Secondly, this thesis aims to map and analyze theoretical and historiographical aspects, case studies, and socio-economic facts that define the specificity of “democratic design” as a concept. In order to achieve this aim, I shall address the intricacies of a totalitarian system versus a democratic one. It is my purpose to scrutinize seminal writings in Western design history, to deconstruct the rationale behind this modernist canon, and to see how “democratic design” functioned within this framework. My discussion will not concentrate on ascertaining if the Western canon can be applied to non-Western design; rather, I shall investigate whether and to what degree communist European design is excluded from this historical structure, questioning the very terms on which this narrative is set up. Part of my theoretical method, then, is historiographical. I shall also use a historical approach belonging to politic, economic and social histories, looking at how ideas about democratic design were expressed

theoretically in design history, and functioned in relation to the societies in and for which they were conceived, either in a Western capitalist system or in an Eastern European communist one.

Investigating the socialist notion of “democratic design” will mean looking at the history of design, whose most powerful model, that of Nikolaus Pevsner, a German-born British art historian, was created in 1936 and subsequently revised in 1949. This model is based on Pevsner’s *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (1936, 1949) in which he theorizes about design theories and practices from William Morris to Walter Gropius, mainly from 1860 to 1914, and links mass industrialization and ideas of social reform and technological innovation.⁷ Pevsner’s model, while implicitly presuming to be about all design, is based on the imperial economic powers of Western Europe and excludes not only non-Western world design but also Eastern, Southern European and Scandinavian design. Eastern communist design is not considered to be part of this European modern world and, subsequently, of the design history canon. Pevsner’s model, while no longer the only one in the field, has played an important role in shaping the field and continues to play a significant role in design history. As such, critiquing what during the Cold War period was considered the dominant modernist model of design history is part of my thesis. I am using a Western European, canonical model to look at Eastern socialist design, while recognizing that this model is insufficient, for a number of reasons. One of them concerns the fact that this model offers basic information on the relationship between design and industrialization, claiming the

⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner, “Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius” *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, 3rd ed., (1936; Harmondsworth: Middlesex Penguin Books, 1960) 19-39.

making of modern design as a self-sufficient domain, one that is not related to daily life. Pevsner did not focus on how the design functioned in relation to larger communities. Also, the Pevsnerian model brings into discussion the debate about the supremacy of handicraft over machine production and vice versa in respect to design. The author of this canonical model concluded that Morris, a supporter of the revival of handicraft, and Gropius, Morris's follower (according to Pevsner) and a supporter of mixing handicraft and industrial standardization, were key in the modern movement. This movement, described by Pevsner, is rooted mainly in England and Western Europe, as they were the most economically developed geographical places and the ones from which the modern movement started spreading to America. In addition to the Western European contribution, however, other parts of Europe contributed to the making of industrial design and they are not included in the canon.

I am also looking at the Pevsnerian canonical model because its exclusive framework was still powerful after the Second World War; it was widely used to look at design in the countries affected by the Cold War. I shall make use of a historiographical approach, acknowledging there are several post-1989 critical and comprehensive overviews on the history of East German communist design which reveal only parts of its complexity.⁸ They offer useful social and political historical information that I will use,

⁸ Among those that exist are several attempts made by East German scholars such as Ernst Hedler, Ulrich Ralf and Georg Bertsch on DDR products. See a brief historical outline on East German design illustrated with photos of mass consumer goods "made in DDR" in Ernst Hedler and Ulrich Ralf, *DDR Design = East German Design = Design de la RDA 1949-1989* (Köln: Taschen, 2004) 190; Georg Bertsch, Ernst Hedler, and Matthias Dietz, *SED - Schönes Einheits Design. Stunning Eastern Design. Savoir Eviter Le Design* (Köln: Taschen, 1990) 172-74. Western academics such as Paul Betts or Eli Rubin have also scrutinized design in the German Democratic Republic, discussing important ideas and moments of this little-known phenomenon of design from the Eastern

though I recognize that they do not question design in a larger “democratic” context. But how the history of communist design situates itself towards its capitalist counterpart is a complex, undocumented matter. The same may be said of the Western traditional interpretation about its uneasy fellow, communist design.

The thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter One will investigate the historical notion of “democratic design,” its evolution as a concept, as well as its acknowledged historical significance. I shall investigate the historical period and socio-political context, when design became correlated with mass production and social reform. The chapter will trace and discuss the Pevsnerian history of modern design starting with John Ruskin’s anti-industrial attitude and Arts and Crafts theory as seen in William Morris’s writings. These refer to the rejection of technology and the idea of crafts combined with Morris’s socialist vision of art for everybody. The early British anti-industrial approach will be contrasted to the American and German visions, which emphasize the importance of the machine. It will be argued that it was the American assimilation of Arts and Crafts principles that shaped the early conception of “democratic design.” I shall also refer to the importance of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, founded in 1907 to promote German design, manufacturers, and national industry, which was concerned not only with craft objects but also with mass-produced items.

Another component of the discussion investigating the notion of “democratic design” will be dedicated to the concept of “standardization” -- the interchangeability of

European states. See Paul Betts, “The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 731-65; Eli Rubin, “Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic: Toward an Economic, Consumer, Design, and Cultural History,” diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004.

parts -- and, in particular, how the American industrialist Henry Ford contributed greatly to industrial efficiency and more profitable production intended for mass reception of serialized, machine-made goods. One of his central preoccupations, the standardization of mechanized mass production, would influence the design thinking that was developing in Germany, including that of Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus vision.

Democratic tendencies associated with industrial design in Scandinavia and Soviet Russia will be discussed. It will be shown that the USSR worked closely with several Bauhaus designers such as Hannes Meyer who, for a time, embraced communist ideas. As such, the great significance of the Bauhaus vision, as outlined in Pevsner's model of design history, was also shared by Eastern Europe.

In Chapter Two, I shall consider the relationship between design and democracy within the ideology of the Cold War framework, also looking at the infringements on democracy in both systems. The understanding of the notion of "democratic design" will be examined in both "democracies," looking at how it was comprehended within the American "liberal democracy" and within the East German communist "socialist democracy." The post-Second World War period is informed by an ideological confrontation between American capitalist ideology and that of the DDR communist republic from the Eastern bloc, which was strongly determined by the authoritarian politics of the USSR. On the economic level, the ideological discourse focused on a centralized planned economy, heavy industry and production (in the DDR), or on a free market, industry and consumption (in the USA). The notion of the communist economic plan will be discussed within the context of the East German concept of the "people's economy." Likewise, the notion of "people's capitalism" is addressed in relation to the

American government. On the social level, the ideology operated with the notion of class which needs to be investigated. The purchaser is represented by the American middle class, the working class or the proletariat, which will be discussed. The concept of consumerism will be looked at in a capitalist economy as well as in a communist one.

Chapter Three will focus on American “democratic design,” relating it to “democratic design” principles analyzed in Chapter One, and to the self-declared governing rules within a free market economy. In this section I shall question the role of state and private American policy makers in the design industry and the importance of the Eames as professional designers with a strong design philosophy in regards to a human need-centred approach to design that focused on low-price mass-produced items for everyday use. I shall also discuss the significance of the craft component in the Eames’s practice, as related to their vision of high-quality design. In this chapter, I shall look closely at their plywood chairs from the late 1940s and their Sofa Compact from the 1950s to investigate their approach to “democratic design.” I shall investigate the topic of how they related their ideas to those of the ideology of the capitalist system.

The American postwar national economic policy was generated to a large extent by Roosevelt’s mass-housing programme, which called for mass-consumption of mass-manufactured domestic goods. Also, the notion of built-in obsolescence will be addressed here. The Eames collaborated closely with private manufacturers and the American government as their public clients. Charles Eames delivered public lectures, wrote articles in important American architecture and design magazines (such as *California Arts and Architecture* and *Design Today*) and made short films to present Charles and Ray’s design projects. Important museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)

in New York, and private entrepreneurs involved in design industry organized design competitions to promote objects for the postwar American middle class and, at the same time, published catalogues promoting the “precepts” of modern design within American “democracy.” The Eames’s early exposure as professional designers is related to the MOMA policy.

In Chapter Four, I shall question the role of the communist state in “democratic design” and the position of professional designers from the communist German Democratic Republic. I will also look at the way that socialist designers made reference to Western design practice and will investigate the topic of how designers functioned within the Soviet ideology of the political system. The *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (the SED, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany) was the ruling party in East Germany. It established “living standards and way of life under socialism” that manifested in design practice. Because of the political implications, those in the field of industrial design had an ambivalent relationship to the past and to the Bauhaus phenomenon, perceived sometimes as a weapon of Western imperialism, especially because the postwar Bauhaus-centred design institutions in West Germany and America. Designers worked for the state and with manufacturers that were all called *der Volkseigene Betrieb* (the VEB), meaning the people-owned factory or enterprise, which referred to the system in which the working class collectively shared the means of production and ownership.

There were designers who tried to reconcile the Bauhaus modernist approach with communist principles and the totalitarian state ideology. In 1951, for example, Martin Kelm, a student of the Bauhäusler Mart Stam, became the head of the Industrial Design

Institute in Berlin. He was a SED member and the most influential theoretician of communist industrial design, calling for qualitative standards for the everyday consumer in East Germany, and writing an important dissertation on communist socialist design (*Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus, Product Design in Socialism*, 1971). He also wrote articles in the specialized journal for industrial design *form+zweck (Form and Function)* established in 1957 and published by the Industrial Design Institute in Berlin, a state-sponsored institution. An intricate state apparatus controlled the production and quality of design and organized the socialist Leipzig fairs to promote communist goods. To investigate if and how theory and practice functioned together in a unified manner, I shall look at the production of the Hellerau furniture sets (such as chairs, modular cabinets, and wall furniture), designed by Selman Selmanagić, Franz Ehrlich, and Rudolf Horn and produced by the *VEB Deutschen Werkstätten Hellerau* (the People-Owned German Workshops in Hellerau).

The conclusion will recapitulate the topic, methodology, and the discussion undertaken in each chapter of this research, scrutinizing their comparative results to support the idea of “democratic design” as outlined in the thesis statement. It is also my intention to outline important moments that structured the notion of “democratic design”: its roots related to nineteenth-century socialist-based philosophy and the complexity of different ideological encounters which subsequently have contributed to shape the “democratic design” framework. I will also recapitulate the design critique expressed in this dissertation as my contribution to design history and historiography.

This investigation of aspects of Western and Eastern European industrial design within the Cold War framework is undertaken today in a current period of globalization

when industrialization is crucial. An important specific challenge in this analysis of American and DDR design in a post-Soviet period, when the large discourse on Western and Eastern design is informed by a complex global integration, is, in the case of the DDR, the difficulty of gaining access to the non-official design vision of communist designers functioning in a totalitarian regime of the SED. There is a limitation in reading the library and archive sources; this affects my research because knowledge has been carefully controlled and manipulated. At the same time, there is a great deal of varied information in terms of concepts (that is, democracy, communist-socialism, middle class, working class). As such, this context shaped my research.

In the light of the collapsed communist Soviet Eastern Europe and the ongoing process of European political and economic unification, this research, devoted partially to the notion of “democratic design” within the uncharted field of communist design, strives to bring forward new information and analysis that will inform further discussions on other aspects concerning the Cold War design, including some that I have been unable to fully develop here: the notions of gender and race in the context of American capitalist and communist design. More historiographical questions can be raised to investigate the history of regional Central and Eastern European designs and their relationships with Western and non-Western design narratives (such as, design in the People’s Republic of China). As such, the contemporary field of design history studies can be researched within a global context as part of the history of world design and this thesis seeks to contribute a small section to this larger picture.

Chapter One: Mapping the Historical and Conceptual Field of Democratic Design

The evolution and academic recognition of design as an autonomous discipline in relation to institutionalized fine arts at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century are strongly related to the Industrial Revolution. This was connected to the professional recognition of the designer as distinct from the fine artist.⁹ Industrial design was linked with mass production and social reformation. Starting with the middle of the nineteenth century, the general comprehension of the design field was associated with different issues such as ornamentation and taste, beauty of form, purposefulness, and *democratization* (that is, availability of goods for all).

In this chapter focused on the pre-Second World War period, it will be shown that diverse factors played a role in the development of “democratic design” as a complex notion. It will trace the historical and conceptual roots of “democratic design” and its attributes, examining it in relation to the existing canon in design history and suggesting alternative ways of looking at this subject. It will be pointed out that the very concept of “democratic design” is a mixture of American and Western European influences, especially from England, and co-existing with the Scandinavian democratic vision on design. I will examine if there is a theoretical connection between communist and capitalist design in terms of mass production and egalitarian accessibility to “quality” mass manufactured goods. My methodology for this examination will take into consideration how “democratic design” fits into conventional design history and how this theme is informed by other disciplines, such as economy and political history.

⁹ For a comprehensive review of the origins and evolution of design as a modern institutionalized genre, see Catherine McDermott, Introduction. *Essential Design* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1992) 1-17.

The Pevsnerian Model

In the early writings on the history of modern design, published in the 1930s and 1940s, authors such as Nikolaus Pevsner,¹⁰ Siegfried Giedion¹¹ and Herbert Read¹² associated design with industrialization and the “modern movement.” The standard Western model of design history is based to a significant degree on the seminal writing of Nikolaus Pevsner from 1930s. To a lesser degree, it was based on Giedion’s idea of a mechanized force that shapes design. Pevsner was one of the first art historians to theorize about design from William Morris to Walter Gropius, linking mass industrialization, handicraft, mechanization, standardization, and innovation.¹³ Interestingly, his influential theoretical book, first published by Faber and Faber in 1936 under the title *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, became *Pioneers of Modern Design* in

¹⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983) was born in Leipzig, Germany, and moved to London in 1933 due to the Nazi accession to power. He studied British design and architecture and wrote the seminal book *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936) which relates modernism to the nineteenth-century design reform movement. See Jonathan M. Woodham, *A Dictionary of Modern Design* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 338-9.

¹¹ Siegfried Giedion was a Bohemian-born Swiss architectural historian and critic, closely associated with Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus; among his influential books are: *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1941); *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (1948; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955).

¹² The idea of the modern movement was also promoted in England by Herbert Read who, in 1935, wrote an important book presenting the designer as an abstract artist working in industry with standard mass production technologies, propagating the ideal of Walter Gropius. See Herbert Read, *Art and Industry. The Principles of Industrial Design* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935).

¹³ Nikolaus Pevsner, “Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius,” *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, 3rd ed. (1936; Harmondsworth: Middlesex Penguin Books, 1960) 19-39.

the second edition from 1949, published by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MOMA). This second reprint under the aegis of MOMA -- whose members suggested to Pevsner what to alter and what to add to his book -- is important for establishing and maintaining the authority of this canon of modern design in relation to the American architecture and design scene. As it will be shown in Chapter Three, this is the period when MOMA connected design, democracy, and mass production.

Referring especially to the period from 1860 to 1914, Pevsner talks mostly about architecture, engineering, and industrial design, then about painting in Western Europe (especially England and Germany, then Holland, France, and Austria) with a few references to the American architects of that time. Pevsner's achievement was to examine the influence of Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau movements on "modernity," seen as a linear progression, and to relate the roots of the "modern movement" to nineteenth-century design reform. He also considered theories on craft and machine, new materials and individual industrial designers and architects involved in the industrial crucible of the modern movement, which he included into this first written history of how design broke away from historical style.

However, Pevsner's canonical model of the history of design is imbued with ambiguities. Western capitalist design has generally been seen as part of a modern paradigm and design canon as established by Pevsner. Victor Margolin, an important contemporary design historian, has examined Pevsner's design canon and the origins of design history. Margolin shows that Pevsner's and Giedion's writings did not consider design in the socio-political context. Instead, they connected design with the Industrial Revolution and its consequences, such as mass industrialization, thereby confining the

history of design to a Western industrial narrative. It is important for this study to discuss Eastern European and Western design. As Margolin, writing in 2005, has argued, the “world history of design” is still limited to Western design and, therefore, does not include room for a non-Western classification of design history.¹⁴ He calls for a “world history of design” in which the “limited definition of design” would be extended to the “conception of and planning of material and visual culture,” superseding the geographical limitation of the powerful Western industrialization.¹⁵ Design would develop a new narrative framework supported by fresh premises connecting economic, social and political issues.¹⁶

Pevsner’s model of an industrial design narrative and Giedion’s focus on mechanization and design both emphasized the Western European-centred dogma about what design was and how design played out in the historical timeline. The American architectural scene was also referred to by Pevsner as a leading development, but in a manner that made it less important than the European phenomenon. The rationale behind this unidirectional judgment was informed by the powerful economic structures of England and Germany and the developing influence of the United States. Following the imperial authority pattern, Pevsner and Giedion wrote within the context of the most industrialized empires and nations and their supremacy on the world economic market.

¹⁴ Victor Margolin, “A World History of Design and the History of the World,” *Journal of Design History* 18.3 (2005): 235-43. For other discussions on possible approaches to design history see Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part I: Mapping the Field,” *Design Issues* 1.1 (1984): 4-23; Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society, 1750-1980* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

¹⁵ Margolin 239.

¹⁶ Margolin 242.

Design was seen by Pevsner as part of the modern movement and related to notions of “progress” at this time: industrialization and mass production that developed most strongly in some parts of Europe (especially in England and Germany) and America. Pevsner associated the notion of “modern” to “modern life” and the machine: “The true pioneers of the Modern Movement are those who from the outset stood for machine art.”¹⁷ Also, Pevsner described industrialized England as a privileged important location where this movement emerged from the transitional phases such as the Arts and Crafts movement: “the Modern Movement itself ... grew in England, the United States, and on the Continent.”¹⁸ Pevsner’s model of design history not only presents Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau as transitional phases toward the modern movement but also it does not mention the significant involvement of the American milieu in the Arts and Crafts framework. The narrative construction behind modern design was centred on a broader historical canon of modernity based on European imperial power and the idea of national giant states.¹⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner constructed his own vision about the history of design based on selective choices regarding the world states. And his personal idea, later informed by editorial suggestions from MOMA, became the standard model since his history of design, excluding non-Western and Eastern European actors for his canon was focusing on the most industrialized nations.

¹⁷ Pevsner 26.

¹⁸ Pevsner 147.

¹⁹ See Paul Johnson, “The Age of the Giant State,” *Design 1935-1965: What Modern Was: Selections from the Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection*, ed. Martin Eidelberg, Montréal: Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1991) 12-21.

Re-reading Pevsner's Western-European-centred history of design, it is crucial to acknowledge the exclusion of the Northern and Eastern European and non-Western socio-economic forces and the voices that contributed to shaping the early design field. This preconception was based on geographical and politico-economic motives. For example, the Swedish and Finnish architects, designers, and theorists -- who helped to construct modern design and to impose a certain meaning on the idea of "democratic design" as I will discuss later -- were not part of Pevsner's narrative. Scandinavia itself, strangely, was seen by Pevsner to be part of "those Central European countries which were dependant on Germany (Switzerland, Austria, Scandinavia)."²⁰ Russian design, on the other hand, was not mentioned at all.

This Pevsnerian model of design history exposes several factors that have become closely associated with and influential to modern comprehension of design: the link between modern design and industrialization; the bond between design, economy and the politics of power (with crucial repercussions on design status at national and international levels); and the relationship between art and design. It is important for this research to trace the theoretical and practical approaches to design in order to examine why and how certain factors such as mass production, accessibility, or affordability became involved with design and, more specifically, with the concept of "democratic design."

Design and Social Reform: Late Nineteenth-Century England

Nineteenth-century roots of socialism were related to mass production and the idea of accessibility to goods. In England, the socialist-related origins of looking at

²⁰ Pevsner 179.

design emerged during the Industrial Revolution, according to British thinkers such as John Ruskin and William Morris, who, particularly in the case of Morris, shared the socialist political thinking of Karl Marx. The theoretical component of “democratic design” refers to the specific connection between design and its social function, within the context of growing industrialization in the 1850s. In England, important theoreticians such as Ruskin and Morris connected the idea of manufacturing, mechanization, and the poor working and living conditions for labourers with the idea of industrial degradation and the socialist principle of art made available for the people. It was during the second half of the nineteenth century when universal concepts such as freedom, morality, and equality began to be discussed in socialist-related circles²¹ in relation to European industrial production.

One of the first important figures to think of design in this context was the author, artist, and cultural theorist John Ruskin, who pioneered the ideas that came to be associated with the Arts and Crafts movement within Victorian England. He was against industrialization, the division of labour, and standardization. He expressed his ideas in the famous book *Stones of Venice* (1851) where he extolled the qualities of Gothic architecture.²² Ruskin meant that the machine was to blame for what it brings (that is, the social “evils” of the day):

²¹ For example, William Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation in 1883 where he worked with Eleanor Marx, one of Karl Marx’s daughters. In 1884 they founded the Socialist League; Walter Crane, an important member of the British Arts and Crafts Movement joined this organization. For further details on Morris’ socialist activity see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988).

²² It is important to point to Ruskin’s interest in theorizing on architecture as William Morris and Walter Gropius do in relation to design. Interestingly, the early history of

... degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves.²³

The real issue, according to Ruskin, is not that the workmen live a poor life but the fact that they “have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread.”²⁴ This idea of pleasure in labour soon would be embraced by William Morris as a central theme of the Arts and Crafts movement. Ruskin was further preoccupied with a network of interconnected issues such as political economy, price and profit, the wealth of nations, and the role of the state, which, he believed, should have a central position in regulating the economy in service of human beings. Critiquing the contemporary writings by the capitalist economists David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, Ruskin advanced the idea of wealth as “possession of useful articles, which we can use.”²⁵ He advocated in favour of practical aspects of life: “as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption.”²⁶ Finally, focusing on the humanist-centred vision of the national state, Ruskin declared, “There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration.”²⁷ Ruskin, in spite of many socialist-related ideas also,

design was influenced by architectural theories, and this is reflected in Pevsner’s writing, which starts by quoting Ruskin and his ideas on architectural ornamentation.

²³ John Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic,” *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols. (Boston: Estes, 1851) 164.

²⁴ Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic” 164.

²⁵ See John Ruskin, “Ad Valorem,” *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy*, 11th ed., (London: G. Allen, 1896) 123.

²⁶ Ruskin, “Ad Valorem” 155.

²⁷ Ruskin, “Ad Valorem” 156.

progress of commercialism” by a “society of equals which can choose the life it will live” and “it will not endure a vicarious life by means of machinery.”³¹ The machine was associated with ugliness, degradation, exploitation, and what Morris called “the capitalist brutality” against the working classes. Handicraft, conversely, was associated with beauty, joy, pleasurable work, truth to material, liberty, and equality for all the people in order to access goods.

The Arts and Crafts movement was, however, not a monolithic phenomenon. William Morris himself, who “was not free from the charge of hypocrisy” as Stephen Bayley and Sir Terence Conran have observed,³² demonstrated an ambiguous relationship between his theory and practice, and his legacy was received differently in America than in Europe, as Wendy Kaplan has suggested.³³ Although in his writings he advocated for affordable goods for all, Morris designed luxury goods with high-prices, due to the craft-based labour, inaccessible to the members of the ordinary working class.

Democratic Design: Early Twentieth-Century America

The British anti-industrial approach as embraced to varying degrees by the members of the Arts and Crafts movement was opposed at the end of the nineteenth

³¹ Morris, “The Revival of Handicraft,” *Morris on Art and Design* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 196.

³² See Stephen Bayley and Terence Conran, *Intelligence Made Visible* (Richmond Hill: Firefly Books, 2007) 224. Bayley, a British designer and design historian, and Conran, a British designer, architect, and owner of the Habitat stores, founded the London Design Museum in 1989 to support the idea that art and commerce and design and industry are mutually connected.

³³ Wendy Kaplan, “Design for the Real World,” *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004) 19.

century by the American and German visions, which emphasized the importance of the machine. The thought of a definite separation between industry and arts and crafts was superseded in both countries by the mixture of industry with art. It should also be noted that the anti-industrialist attitude of the British Arts and Crafts movement did not express the British government's agenda of that period (when the British parliament discussed how to maintain British supremacy in the production of industrial goods)³⁴ nor were they shared by the majority of the population. Nonetheless, the significance and influence of the Arts and Crafts ideas were widespread in Western Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean by the 1890s.

The American assimilation of Arts and Crafts principles shaped the concept of "democratic design" -- that is, the design for a wide, ordinary audience and large production of everyday goods -- as Wendy Kaplan has stated.³⁵ This came about due to a large emerging middle class in the U.S. in a free market regulated by supply and demand. Kaplan argues that, in addition to being related to technological novelties and the scientific efficiency in using machines, the notion of "democratic design" acquired a much denser meaning in America "because the United States had the most democratic

³⁴ For instance, on August 23, 1887, the British Parliament issued the *Merchandise Marks Act* stipulating that all foreign products without the mark "Made in ..." would be confiscated; finally, this law was known as *Lex Germania* because the German manufacturers were identified by the British as their biggest competitors. See Peter Zec, "Made in Germany," *German/Design/Standards* vol. 2 (Essen: Red Dot Edition, 2006) 11.

³⁵ Wendy Kaplan, "America: the Quest for Democratic Design," *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004) 246-82.

political system.”³⁶ Spreading the principle of equal opportunities for all people was the principal engine that powered the democratization of design in the New World. The understanding and evolution of the concept of American democracy -- the rule of the people -- will be further discussed in Chapter 2, as it has clear relevance for this thesis’ dealing with the notion of “democratic design.” The assimilation of the socialist anti-industrial Arts and Crafts ideas, formulated from within the British imperial monarchy, was realized by individuals within the liberal American democracy; these individuals used industrial achievements in order to survive financially on a free, non-state - controlled market. These people produced goods for a market; the demand was formulated by a new developing social class. This is the American middle class that became increasingly important as a constructed concept of that time, excluding economically the poor, and as a later product of the American “democratic” organization, as will be explained in Chapter 2. Members of the newly emerged American middle class were the recipients of the design production.

As an example of the American relevance to the concept of “democratic design” and the different perception of the Morris legacy, Kaplan discusses the case of the socialist Oscar Lovell Triggs, founder of the William Morris Society in Chicago (1903), who believed in the New Industrialism movement and the establishment of “manufactories”; Triggs thought that “industrial education” would help art and that the machine would assist in providing quality goods, in this way enhancing human creativity.³⁷ The example of Gustav Stickley, a businessman who tried to reconcile craft-

³⁶ Kaplan, “America: the Quest for Democratic Design” 247.

³⁷ Kaplan, “America: the Quest for Democratic Design” 273.

finish with machine-made standard furniture, is also relevant for how the idea of art available for everyone (that is, a democratic art) functioned within the entrepreneurial capitalist market.³⁸ Stickley had a business that functioned on a free market of supply and demand that generated profits for the designer-producer; the demand was represented by the huge populace who, in 1900, could afford to buy goods, so Stickley advertised the “generous” idea of democratization, which includes the principles of availability and accessibility, to support his business. He published a related article called “A Plea for a Democratic Art” (1905).³⁹

In the first part of the twentieth century in the United States, early ideas on mass production and industrial standardization were combined with the principle of equal accessibility to daily goods for all those belonging to the new and increasingly focal middle class. These goods, as a product of industry combined with arts, were designed to be affordable and of good quality.

Standardization and Mass Production: England and Germany

Another component of the discussion regarding “democratic design” is the concept of “standardization,” which was addressed even within the European Arts and Crafts movement. It was Charles Ashbee who, in 1911, endorsed the following axiomatic idea: “The purpose of the ‘arts and crafts’ is to set a standard of excellence in all

³⁸ Kaplan, “America: the Quest for Democratic Design” 274-5.

³⁹ Stickley’s business had limited success and his company went bankrupt in 1915. For further details on Stickley’s professional activity and his plans for rural craft schools in America see Barry Sanders, *A complex Fate: Gustav Stickley and the Craftsman Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press; New York: John Wiley, 1996).

commodities in which the element of beauty enters. The tendency of machine industry is to ‘standardise’, that is to say, to create as many pieces of any commodity to a given type as is economically possible.”⁴⁰ According to him, the standard is a required rule, a norm, or criterion used to define the quality of products. Ashbee acknowledged the social component of design and the ability of industry to produce large quantities of objects according to a given type, a standardized form. Despite Morris’s anti-machine ideas, Ashbee compromised on the use of machine. Referring to the beginning of the Arts and Crafts movement and the controversial relationship between industry and craft introduced by William Morris, Ashbee tried to resolve the seemingly irreconcilable Arts and Crafts ideas with the use of the machine and uniform mechanical standardization. For him, the machine-made objects had mechanical beauty, just as human-made objects had human beauty, in “conformity to the standard of a hand-made piece.”⁴¹ In consequence, excellence as a quality standard was only created by human intervention; the process of standardization was a quantitative one, based on “uniformity, and mechanical precision.”⁴²

The notion of “standardization” was central to the *Deutscher Werkbund*, the German Work Federation, which was founded in 1907 to promote German design, manufacturers, and national industry. It was concerned not only with craft objects but also with mass-produced items; achieving industrial supremacy turned out to be a strong

⁴⁰ C. R. Ashbee, “A Chapter of Axioms, 1911,” *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939*, eds. Tim and Charlotte Benton (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1975) 45.

⁴¹ Ashbee 46.

⁴² Ashbee 46.

aim for the German economy and government, as it had been in Great Britain, which was seen both as a model and a rival. The German architect Herman Muthesius was commissioned to look at the British competition and to write a report for the German government, resulting in his influential book *Das Englische Haus* (*The English House*) published in 1904 and 1905. Muthesius was preoccupied with the social component of design, believing that “art begins, like so much else at home”; he called for a “broader, popular art”⁴³ acknowledging the merit of a newly emerging German middle class (that, for this research, is not as central as the American middle class) with new needs different from those of the aristocracy. For Muthesius the industrial machine was just a simple tool to serve human creativity and necessity; the function of this useful tool was to produce serial objects informed by quality and durability, similar to Ashbee’s ideas. Most of all, Muthesius advocated the idea of quality goods as a national means to gain economic superiority. Finally, he suggested a democratic component of design that “would be available to the greater number of the people ... decent household artifacts for the ordinary man.”⁴⁴ The notion of standardization (*Typisierung*) as related to the newborn comprehension of design and industry was discussed and reinforced by German

⁴³ See Hermann Muthesius, *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst: Wandlung der Architektur im XIX. Jahrhundert und Ihr Heutiger Standpunkt* (Mülheim an der Ruhr: K. Schimmelpfeng, 1902; 2nd ed., 1903); translated by Stanford Anderson as *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and Its Present Condition* (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994) 85. Muthesius thought that “Germany has the reputation for being more precise and rigorous in the organization of its businesses, industries, and public service than other countries.”

⁴⁴ Muthesius, *Stilarchitektur* 95.

design professionals.⁴⁵ In 1916, under military pressure during the First World War, the *Deutsche Normen Ausschuss* (German Standards Commission) began an extensive process of applying standard measures for industrial products; the DIN Format (*Deutsche Industrie-Normen*) was applied to classes of products as a foundation for standardization.⁴⁶

American "Fordism"

The idea of standardized industrial production was developed more practically within the American context. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Henry Ford, the American industrialist, contributed greatly to industrial efficiency and more profitable production intended for the mass reception of serialized, machine-made goods. The term, "Fordism," was identified with mass production. One of Ford's central preoccupations was the standardization of mechanized mass production based on the principles of management that were applied in automobile manufacturing using the assembly line, as explained at that time by the American mechanical engineer and economic theorist Frederick Taylor.⁴⁷ Based on the principle of the standardization of working techniques

⁴⁵ The pivotal dispute within the German Werkbund in 1914 between Muthesius, advocating the idea of *Typisierung* (standardization) and industrial production, and Henry van de Velde, defending the designer's individuality, addressed again the controversial relationship between art and industry, as raised by William Morris. For more details see John Heskett, "The German Werkbund," *Design in Germany, 1870-1918* (London: Trefoil, 1986) 119-136.

⁴⁶ See Reyner Banham, "Germany: Industry and the Werkbund," *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: the Architectural Press, 1960) 78.

⁴⁷ Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1914) is known as the initiator of the scientific management or *Taylorism*, based on four principles explained in his influential book

(a method of work organization based on standard times and tasks aiming to improve labour productivity and industrial efficiency), which implied the use of mechanical devices in order to maximize production, Taylor's method was refined by Henry Ford around 1914. Yet Ford's idea to use a standardized moving assembly line -- embodied in the conveyor belt -- of mechanical items to produce standardized objects -- mass automobiles -- seem not to belong totally to him, as Ray Batchelor has argued.⁴⁸ The idea of combining interchangeability of standardized parts, which is essential for mass production, with automatic machine tools appeared first in the early nineteenth century in American industry, especially in the early manufacture of armoury and sewing machines⁴⁹ as well as in the meat industry.

Ford's revolutionary manufacturing system ascribed certain elements such as low-price, high-wage, high-volume production and mass availability to the application of modern industrial design. He is credited as being the American pioneer who imposed the practicable principle of ordinary mass-produced goods for ordinary people. As Siegfried Giedion has observed:

Henry Ford's function is to have first recognized *democratic possibilities* in the vehicle that had always ranked as a privilege. The idea of transforming so

Principles of Scientific Management (1911). He advocated for the standardization of working tasks, division of labour and the cooperation between managers and workers.

⁴⁸ See Ray Batchelor, "Building the Machine," *Henry Ford, Mass Production, Modernism, and Design* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1991) 43. The author discusses the mass production phenomenon in the context of the preoccupations of the modern movement, looking at functionalism as "the mirror of mass production."

⁴⁹ See David A. Hounshell, "The Sewing Machine and the American System of Manufacturers," *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 67-123.

complicated a mechanism as the motorcar from a luxury article into one of common use, and of bringing its price within reach of the average man, would have been unthinkable in Europe [emphasis added].⁵⁰

It is Henry Ford who, in the 1920s, successfully managed in a liberal capitalist market, in a democratic political system, to produce goods which were accessible for the majority of people in terms of the buying opportunity and price affordability. As Giedion noted, Ford was successful in his practical achievements as a businessman in the American market; Giedion also claimed that the idea of transforming luxury goods into ordinary goods that would be available for middle-class people was, at that time, inconceivable in Europe. However, Giedion did not relate this to, or even consider, William Morris's theoretical principles about accessible education, freedom, and quality of life for all.

Somewhat ironically, it was the American collaboration with the 1925 edition of the European *Encyclopedia Britannica* that coined and recorded the notion of mass production within modern design history. According to David Hounshell, its North American editor, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* asked Ford to compose an article about his assembly line method of manufacturing. The editorial staff read the article and chose to use the term "mass production" to describe the activity of the American industrialist.⁵¹ The 1929 *Encyclopedia Britannica* edition acknowledged the impact of Ford's thinking and emphasized the importance of his serial manufacturing system, describing what we

⁵⁰ Siegfried Giedion, "The Assembly Line in the Twentieth Century," *Mechanization Takes Command, a Contribution to Anonymous History* 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955) 116.

⁵¹ It is most likely that Ford's article would have been conceived by the ghost-writer William Cameron, the spokesman of the businessman. See David Hounshell, "The Ethos of Mass Production and Its Critics," *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 303-30.

can consider as essential to the concept of “democratic design” -- mass-produced goods for mass consumers, low-priced and good-quality wares.

In the Ford practice the cycle of production starts with the consumer. Ford holds that a commodity must first of all be designed to fit the needs of the largest possible number of consumers both in quality and price, and that the number of consumers will be continuously increased by constantly lowering the price of the article.⁵²

Interestingly, Ford’s activity was seen as oriented to the widest number of consumers and not to the usual profit-driven American capitalist model. This is in accordance with what Ford wrote previously in his autobiography from 1922: “Production for consumption implies that the quality of the article produced will be high and that the price will be low, that the article be one which serves the people and not merely the producer.”⁵³ According to Ford, he paid his workers high wages to assure that they had “the maximum buying power.”⁵⁴ Moreover, the accessibility of design objects to as many people as possible means equal opportunities for design receivers to buy items to fulfill their needs. This egalitarian opportunity, however, does not imply that all people are equal. Ford, as a typical representative of a liberal, non-state-controlled economy and capitalist democracy, had the firm conviction that good business, moral freedom of labour, and mass production can exist only in a social system in which “the Government is a servant” and where “the slogan of ‘less government in business and more business in government’

⁵² “Henry Ford - American Manufacturer.” *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., 1929.

⁵³ See Henry Ford, Introduction. *My Life and My Work* (1922; Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company Publishers, 1987) 12.

⁵⁴ Ford 19.

is a very good one ... on the account of the people.”⁵⁵ He strongly criticized communist Bolshevism as a socio-economic failure.⁵⁶ In opposition to the strength and freedom imbued in American liberalism, Ford considered communism to be “unnatural and immoral,” promoting “a prison-like discipline in which all are treated alike.”⁵⁷ It was precisely for this reason that Ford thought “there can be no greater absurdity and no greater disservice to humanity in general than to insist that all men are equal.”⁵⁸ Criticizing the socialist Bolshevik system, he referred generally to the idea of equal abilities of human beings and not to equal opportunities.

Mass Production for “Everyone”: Walter Gropius’s Bauhaus

The ideas regarding the relationship between art and industry, and the principle of industrial standardization and mass production were further developed in Europe after the First World War. In Germany, the Bauhaus School of Design, led by Walter Gropius from 1919 to 1928, developed the common concept of “art and industry” into a “new unity” in which form and function fused. Recognizing the importance of industrialization, and continuing debates in many cases begun in the context of the Werkbund, members of the Bauhaus raised a very complex discussion about the relationships between functionality and form, mass production, and human needs; the different attitudes within

⁵⁵ Ford 8.

⁵⁶ Ford 9.

⁵⁷ Ford 4.

⁵⁸ Ford 10.

the Bauhaus revealed a complexity of design approaches.⁵⁹ Walter Gropius formulated the crucial principles of modern mass design; he also warned of the dangerous lack of quality inherent in mass production.⁶⁰ Walter Gropius called for standard “prototypes of products suitable for mass production and typical of our time,”⁶¹ designed to serve the needs of the people and to improve their quality of life. In his 1926 writing referring to the principles of Dessau Bauhaus production, Gropius clearly outlined the most important features of what he believed modern design should be:

The products reproduced from prototypes that have been developed by the Bauhaus can be offered at a reasonable price only by utilization of all the modern, economical methods of standardization (mass production by industry) and by large-scale sales.⁶²

Thus, the complex mix of mass production based on standard types, quality goods and affordable price would be “accessible to everyone,”⁶³ revealing the notion of availability to buy ordinary design wares for all the people. Gropius thought that “the creation of

⁵⁹ During its short and significant existence (1919-1933), the Bauhaus School of Design had three locations (Weimar, Dessau, Berlin) and three directors (Walter Gropius 1919-1928, Hannes Meyer 1928-1930, and Mies van der Rohe 1930-1933), each of whom had different visions as to the focus and politics of the school; as well, the Bauhaus professors expressed various opinions on the Bauhaus mission. The Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau was a public school under state patronage. The Bauhaus in Berlin was a private school and it was closed by the Nazi regime, under the accusation of “cultural Bolshevism.”

⁶⁰ Walter Gropius, “Standardization,” *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, trans. P. Morton Shand (1935; London: Faber and Faber, 1965) 30-7.

⁶¹ See Walter Gropius, “Bauhaus Dessau - Principles of Bauhaus Production 1926,” *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939*, eds. Tim and Charlotte Benton (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1975) 148.

⁶² Gropius, “Bauhaus Dessau...” 149.

⁶³ Gropius, “Bauhaus Dessau...” 148.

standard types for all practical commodities of everyday use is a social necessity.”⁶⁴ As such, the social function of design is seen as an essential part of modern design.

Walter Gropius referred to the principles of standardization and mass production as developed by the American industrialists Henry Ford and Frederic Taylor.⁶⁵ The principles of mass production and standardization promoted by Gropius were indeed borrowed, in part, from the USA and the work of Henry Ford. Gropius experienced American manufacturing principles directly in 1928, the year of his Bauhaus resignation, when he visited the Ford factory at River Rouge. Gropius thought that, in order to be mass-produced, a product had to be standardized and this also applied to the design object.

Many other Bauhaus members supported the concept of a standard prototype as being crucial for designing mass production. For instance, an important Bauhaus member with Central and Eastern European roots (Hungarian), Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, advocated the integration of technology and industry into the arts and called for mass production and mechanization as part of the economy. He supported the idea of the standardized prototype as “the single solution that is best for our times.” According to Moholy-Nagy, the Bauhaus’ mission was to “design prototypes for the whole house ... to improve our entire way of life by means of economic production which is only possible with the aid of the prototype.”⁶⁶ This social aim of design for people living in a socialist organized state

⁶⁴ Gropius, *Bauhaus Dessau* 148.

⁶⁵ See John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 65-7.

⁶⁶ See Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, “The New Typography, 1923,” *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, eds. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) 303.

was one of the main ideas for some Bauhaus members who shared left-wing political views. Oscar Schlemmer, famous for creating the Bauhaus Theatre and the *Triadic Ballet* performance, believed that the Bauhaus reflected the collective desire of the German people: “Did not the majority of the Germans wish to build the cathedral of Socialism in 1918? ... And what is a People’s State, if not Socialism? Moreover: is not socialism the same as a social democratic or a communist party?”⁶⁷

Nazi Design: “Art for All”

In the early 1930s, the Bauhaus members and their philosophy of design and architecture were persecuted and forbidden by the Nazis precisely for their Socialist and Bolshevik political orientation. This was part of a larger conservative and nationalist campaign against “degenerate” modern art.⁶⁸ Design under the National Socialism (Nazi) dictatorial regime was subject to the art policy promoted by the Third Reich as “popularly accessible art for all classes.”⁶⁹ Although, closely linked to some notions of “democratic design,” the idea of a *Volk* or *national community* was central to Hitler’s political propaganda. Nazi politics made use of technology in order to promote national industrial achievements. Thus, when technology and efficient standardization of production combined with the national defense programme, design became publicly involved with

⁶⁷ Oscar Schlemmer, “Diary Extract, 1927,” *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, eds. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) 304.

⁶⁸ Lisa Pine, “Art and Architecture,” *Hitler’s ‘National Community’: Society and Culture in Nazi Germany* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007) 199-214.

⁶⁹ Pine 202-3.

industry. As a symbol of the nationalist power of a pure racial community, Hitler wanted a people's car, the *Volkswagen*, to be used on Germany's new motorways, the *Autobahnen*.⁷⁰ The idea of mass accessibility to inexpensive, yet quality serialized goods for an entire nation served the dictatorial Fascist regime as a means of propaganda. This availability of design products to all German people, which can be interpreted as a "democratization" of opportunities to attain goods, was used to consolidate the nationalist discourse on the pure Aryan race and to legitimate the construction of the "Third German Reich."

Democratic Tendencies: the Soviet Model

The Constructivist contribution to design and technology is crucial for understanding how the concept of "democratic design" related to communism came into being. The avant-garde origins of socialist Soviet industrial design, which emerged from the Russian Empire, go back to Alexander Rodchenko and Vladimir Tatlin, who designed models for daily goods in 1920s. Both taught at the State Higher Arts and Technical Studios, known as VKhUTEMAS from 1920 to 1926, and renamed as VKhUTELN in 1926 when the studios became the State Higher Institute of Art and Technology.⁷¹

⁷⁰ The Volkswagen, created initially by Ferdinand Porsche previous to the Nazi rise to power, was small and inexpensive; it was to be mass produced after the WWII. See Penny Sparke, "Germany," *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 88-90. Also, for a documented history of the Volkswagen brand see Walter Henry Nelson, *Small Wonder: The Amazing Story of the Volkswagen* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970).

⁷¹ VKhUTEMAS was established in Moscow by decree of the Soviet government "for training highly qualified master artists for industry as well as designers and directors for trade and technical schools." In 1921, Lenin visited the VKhUTEMAS. See the *Great*

However, like the German Bauhaus, it was dissolved in the 1930s. Interestingly, this design education institution was organized according to principles similar to those applied at the German Bauhaus. The Constructivists believed in a new kind of art, related to useful objects and the social needs of a revolutionary society, the Russian Soviets of the working people. Tatlin believed that art should provide models for technical objects. Also, he wanted to discover how design and standardization would connect. The principles of industrial design began to be applied in industry because the new socialist order was based on the working class as the core of the future communist society. Victor Margolin has examined the way artists such as Rodchenko negotiated the changing relations between their social ideals and the political realities they confronted.⁷²

One of the most interesting and important aspects of Russian communist design that further influenced the comprehension of “democratic design,” was that expressed by Vladimir Tatlin. His prolific and practical work joined his theoretical writings. In Russian communist society of the 1920s and 1930s, the words “design” and “designer” were not part of the artistic vocabulary. Nonetheless, Tatlin talked about “the artist as an organizer of everyday life.”⁷³ Preoccupied with the debate on the relation between art and industry and the relation between human and object, but now within the context of the new Soviet society, he understood artistic production as part of a larger material culture: “Against the

Soviet Encyclopaedia, 3rd ed., vol. 5 (Moscow: Sovetskaia Entiklopediia Publishing House, 1970) 530.

⁷² Victor Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917-1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁷³ Vladimir Tatlin, “The Artist as an Organizer of Everyday Life 1929,” *Tatlin*, ed. Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova (New York: Rizzoli, 1988) 266.

old artistic thinking it is necessary to set the new form: material culture.”⁷⁴ In fact, he talked about the Eastern European “artist of material culture”⁷⁵ -- using that very term -- supporting the idea of mass production and industrial standardization as important for the new collective society, the proletariat.

Moreover, Russian Soviet design shared a close bond and affinity with the socialist ideas embraced by the German Bauhaus members. The mutual connection between Western and Eastern European design in the 1920s and 1930s shows a complexity of design history which is not exposed in the canonical model of Nikolaus Pevsner, or in most other design histories. For example, in addition to the explicitly written socialist principles of some Bauhaus designers, Hannes Meyer, the second director of the Dessau Bauhaus, dismissed without notice in 1930, went to Soviet Moscow from 1930 to 1936, where he was actively involved in teaching design and science and planning the socialist state.⁷⁶ The idea of designing standard products, either daily goods or houses, for the people is firmly expressed in his previous writings. In 1926, for example, Meyer has stated that:

The surest sign of true community is the satisfaction of the same needs by the same means. The upshot of such a collective demand is the standard product.

⁷⁴ Vladimir Tatlin, “The Problem of the Relationship Between Man and Object 1930,” *Tatlin*, ed. Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova (New York: Rizzoli, 1988) 268.

⁷⁵ Tatlin, “The Problem...” 268. For a detailed discussion about the comprehension of material culture, *material'-naia kul'tura*, and its application in Tatlin's design activity see Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova, “Tatlin, The Organizer of Material into Objects,” *Tatlin*, ed. Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova (New York: Rizzoli, 1988) 134-54.

⁷⁶ For further details about the complex professional architectural work of Meyer in the Soviet Union, Germany, Mexico, and Switzerland see Werner, Kleinerüschkamp, ed., *Hannes Meyer, 1889-1954 Architekt, Urbanist, Lehrer* (Berlin: Ernst, 1989).

The folding chair, roll-top desk, light bulb ... are manufactured in quantity as a mass-produced article, as a mass-produced device, as a mass-produced structural element, as a mass-produced house.... The degree of our standardization is an index of our communal productive system.⁷⁷

Meyer advocated for standardization in design that would fulfill the aim of achieving industrial productivity (on which the Soviet socialist economy was based) and would best serve the collective needs. He also talked about the idea of similar needs that should be satisfied by similar means. Indeed, the communist design came to be characterized by uniformity and standardization of goods and living. Design is meant to satisfy the needs of the collective people -- the working class or the proletariat -- taking into consideration economic, utilitarian, and social concerns.

Democratic Design: the Scandinavian Model

The emphasis on the social function of design has been the main concern of Northern European countries since the turn of the last century. Embraced by Social Democratic governments, the idea of social improvement of people's lives became related to social consciousness in design. The strong tradition of Scandinavian craftsmanship was interwoven with technological innovation in order to provide quality goods for people who were intended to benefit from equal opportunities. Two key design exhibitions promoted this socialist-centred Scandinavian design philosophy. The Home Exhibition held in Stockholm in 1917 referred to "the integration of social and democratic values in the design industry in order to create objects that were not only

⁷⁷ See Hannes Meyer, "The New World 1926," *Hannes Meyer Bauten, Projekte und Schriften. Buildings, Projects, and Writings*, ed. Claude Schnaidt (Teufen AR/Schweiz: A. Niggli, 1965) 93.

aesthetically meaningful, but also available to a wide non-elite market.”⁷⁸ Promoting affordability and accessibility to daily goods for the working class was one of the objectives of this show. Design was perceived as a vehicle for social improvement of all people’s lives. Yet the conciliation between national artistic craft and industrial product was subject to discussion. The second Stockholm exhibition in 1930 was oriented in accordance with the international functionalist emphasis within architecture and design. This exhibition helped to promote the notion of democratization that was understood as equal opportunities to affordable goods as a result of the developing mass-production technology.

In addition to official socialist doctrine, the socialist ideological platform of these design exhibitions was based on the ideas of important Swedish thinkers, social theorists, and art historians. They shaped and promoted the notion of “democratic design” in the larger framework of socialist reform system. As an example, Ellen Key, the social thinker and women’s rights advocate, had already written in 1899 in her *Skönhet för Alla (Beauty for All)* that “when beautiful is as cheap as the ugly, only then can beauty for all become a reality.”⁷⁹ Gregor Paulsson, an important Swedish art historian, reinforced the socialist thinking in design. In 1919, he wrote an influential book called *Vackrare Vardagsvara (Better Things for Everyday Life)* in which he advocated “a unified taste” that “gives a unified form to all of society. This is the deeper meaning of the slogan ‘more beautiful

⁷⁸ See David Revere McFadden, ed., “Scandinavian Modern: A Century in Profile,” *Scandinavian Modern Design 1880-1980* (New York: Abrams, 1982) 17.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Katherine E. Nelson, “Democracy,” *New Scandinavian Design*, eds. Raul Cabra and Katherine Nelson (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004) 28.

things for everyday use’.”⁸⁰ His ideas later were borrowed by the Swedish company IKEA to spread a specific commercially-driven form of “democratic design” as Katherine Nelson has noted.⁸¹ The Swedish theoreticians Ellen Key and Gregor Paulsson shared the socialist belief of the British William Morris that art, education, and freedom should benefit all people.⁸²

Besides all the cases mentioned above, the idea of producing multiple wares for as many people as possible also developed in remote, small Northern European countries, such as Estonia. After the First World War, the newly independent Estonian state, free from the Russian Tsarist authority, encountered important industrial changes (that is, the potential for standardization) and social changes (the growth of the working class). Furniture companies such as the Estonian branch of the British Luterma oriented themselves towards the standardized large-scale production of inexpensive furniture.

⁸⁰ Nelson 28. Gregor Paulsson lived in Berlin in 1912 when he became interested in the Deutscher Werkbund ideals; see Woodham 334. Interestingly, Paulsson referred to William Morris and the German Workshops in Hellerau. Gregor Paulsson *Vackrare Vardagsvara* (1919; Stockholm: Eurographic AB, 1995) 43-4. Ellen Key and Gregor Paulsson’s seminal writings will be available in English for the first time in August 2008 in an important catalogue on Swedish modernism. See Lucy Creagh, Helena Kaberg, Barbara Miller Lane, and Kenneth Frampton, eds., *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008).

⁸¹ Nelson, “Democracy” 25-66. Established in 1943, the furniture and furnishings giant IKEA is exemplary in terms of private influence over the world market of affordable products, with a marketing strategy referring to a “wide range of home furnishings items of good design and function, at prices so low that the majority of the people can afford to buy them.” In 1956, IKEA introduced the self-assembly flat-pack principle for its customers that became very popular. For more details on IKEA history, design, and marketing philosophy see Woodham 209-10.

⁸² The early Scandinavian notion of “democratic design” was expanded in the 1970s and related to social justice, including other social categories such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities. The new concept was called “design for everybody,” “design for all” or “universal design.”

Furthermore, in 1936, the exhibition *Furniture for Everyone* was opened in Tallin by Luterma and it was perceived as “a change of direction, as it mainly introduced inexpensive standard furniture for the masses.”⁸³

Conclusion

As discussed, the idea of “democratic design” is close to the modern roots of design starting with eighteenth and nineteenth-century mechanization and the boom of industrialization. In 1936, Nikolaus Pevsner wrote a Western European-centred history of modern industrial design and architecture from 1860 to 1914, including examples within the most industrialized American and European nations; however, some of his points of discussion referred briefly to post-1914 design issues (for example, the Bauhaus School of Design). In 1949, he reprinted an enriched edition under a new title, published by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The important Pevsnerian canon ignores design in the rest of Europe and in the non-Western world. Pevsner’s model ignored significant design-related developments that took place in Northern and Eastern European national states such as Sweden and Soviet Russia. Moreover, after the First World War, Western and Eastern European designers and design schools such as the German Bauhaus and the Russian VKhUTEMAS shared socialist-based ideologies and ideas concerning design. The USSR worked closely with several Bauhaus designers such as Hannes Meyer who,

⁸³ Luterma was an English-based furniture company established in 1897; its Estonian counterpart, called Venesta (Veneer+Estonia) helped to spread industrial production and activity through Estonia. The connection between interwar Estonian design and the Modernist Movement philosophy is addressed in the context of significant social changes and Estonian government involvement. See Jüri Kermik, “Promoting Change. The A.M. Luther Company 1920-40,” *Estonian Art* 2 (1999) 13 November 2007 <http://www.einst.ee/Ea/2_99.html>.

for a period, embraced communism. A relevant parallel exists in the Bauhaus closure by the German dictatorial Nazi regime, and the VKhUTEMA closure by the Russian dictatorial Stalinist regime.

The history of Eastern European design, in so far as one can speak of it as a history,⁸⁴ does not distance itself from industrialization and the modern roots of design before the First World War and Second World War. After the Second World War, the Soviet ideology disseminated by the leading communist party to the rest of the Soviet-occupied European states, as followed, in different degrees, in the different parts of the Eastern bloc. It would influence the economy and industrial design. The Russian satellite countries within Eastern Europe would become highly controlled by the “democratic” communist state as it will be shown in Chapter Two. After the Second World War, Eastern and Western European and world design would be overshadowed by the Iron Curtain and there is a lack of accurate information on this period of design history.

Democratization of design was part of the tumultuous history of design in Western and Eastern Europe and in America. Many authors, thinkers, manufacturers, and design professionals reflected upon the connection between design and industry, design and reception, and design and social reform. “Democratic design” was looked at as a theoretical construct involved with everyday activities that could help to serve people’s needs and improve their quality of life. These goals, it was believed, could be achieved through an egalitarian access to quality mass manufactured daily products for all the people.

⁸⁴ As it exists right now, there are regional design histories, but it hasn’t been looked at holistically.

Many socio-political and geographical factors contributed to building up the meanings of the notion of “democratic design.” As shown in this chapter, which is focused on the pre-Second World War period, the alliance of design and democracy (that is, accessibility to inexpensive high-quality goods and services for the masses) is a result of industrialization, modernity, and capitalist or socialist thought. Alongside the broader democratic design notions, affordable high-quality mass-produced goods for all the people, there are some national and regional variations: a socialist component centred on users and producers in the case of Ruskin and Morris (in this case, the Arts and Crafts movement is representative of the British socio-economic situation); individual profit in the case of America, mixed sometimes with social aims (Ford is representative of the individual freedom, liberal-oriented American society); and a strong national identity and focus on economic supremacy in the case of Germany (in the case of the *Deutsche Werkbund*).

The notion of “democratic design” will be developed and receive new layers of meaning, in the Cold War, as will be shown specifically in the next chapters. The Western canon of modern design history was based on an ideological separation between the Western and Eastern Europe: liberal capitalism versus socialist communism. Ironically, this pattern of thinking about design will be kept and highly reinforced during the Cold War period when the notion of “democratic design” will be highly imbued with political ideology. Indeed, vestiges of this divisive model often remain firmly in place.

Chapter 2: Design, Democracy, and Opposing Politico-Economic Systems

In this chapter, I shall discuss design and democracy related to the conceptual model of democratic design, looking at how its understanding was informed by ideology⁸⁵ in the larger context of the Cold War period examined here (1945-1970).

The following topic will be addressed: the relationship between design and the American “liberal democracy,” and design and the East German communist “socialist democracy.”

The notion of democracy is complex and full of contradictions. Most simply, democracy means a form of government informed by the rule of the *demos*, that is, of the people, “where ‘people’ designates the popular masses (in contrast to social or economic elites).”⁸⁶ The Cold War period is characterized by an ideological confrontation between the American capitalist system and the Russian communist one (the DDR being part of the latter). Both capitalist and communist states and their citizens were affected by the ideological indoctrination against the “enemy”: either American imperialism or the

⁸⁵ Ideology is a complex notion in terms of its meanings; etymologically, the simplest definition comes from the German word *Weltanschauung*, a world-view. Ideologies are relative and subjective notions. The understanding of the word “ideology” that I am using here refers to a “complete and self-consistent set of attitudes, moral views, empirical beliefs (...).” For example, the Marxist world-view is related to the notion of class, emphasizing the idea that the workers are ideologically manipulated by the owners of the capital to have a false vision of their place in a truly exploitative society (this is the “false consciousness” of the proletariat, an ideologically-induced world-view). See David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*, 3rd ed., (London: Routledge, 2004) 232-33.

⁸⁶ Andrew Levine, *Political Keywords: A Guide for Students, Activists, and Everyone Else* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) 43. The Greek etymology of the word “democracy” stems from the original meaning of the Athenian democracy: “*demokratia* - rule of, or by, or, more literally, strength or power in the hands of, the *demos* -- the people as a whole, or, in the eyes of its enemies, the common or non-noble (non-*Eupatrid*) people.” During history, the word “democracy,” which came into Latin in the thirteenth century, had different meanings. See John Dunn, *Democracy: A History* (Toronto: Penguin, 2006) 34.

Soviet-controlled East German dictatorship. The state apparatuses used specific rhetoric to disseminate their propaganda and to shape their own notion of democracy, which affected daily life. In this chapter, the ideological constructions of the hostile Cold War period will be discussed from political, economic, and social perspectives, considering how these constructions influenced the processes of conception and of industrial production (as it will be shown in chapters 3 and 4), and the distribution and reception of goods. In relation to the last phase, notions of consumerism will be discussed within the capitalist and communist economies.

Capitalist and Communist “Democracies”

There are early key discussions about the notion of democracy that are relevant for this research on “democratic design,” because they lead to the period of the Cold War. For example, the period from 1910s to 1930 underpins the political ideology of democracy.

A liberal democracy, a non-homogeneous set of ideas, is based on the principles of representative democracy (election of a small number of representatives by a whole) and the traditional values of liberalism: civil rights and natural rights that are inscribed in a constitution.⁸⁷ This refers to “the political equality of all mature individuals” linked to institutional mechanisms and “above all the free market.”⁸⁸ Personal skills and merits of

⁸⁷ Robertson 281.

⁸⁸ *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 222. Modern liberal democracies justify the sovereign power of the state and are against the principle of a single-party system.

free individuals are central to the system; state intervention is a problematic issue because it brings up a confrontation between the private sector and the public one.

The American concept of liberal democracy as the form of state government represents the “oldest continuing democracy,”⁸⁹ emerging from the tumultuous situation of the American colonies under the domination of the British Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. The 1777 draft of the constitution of one of the American colonies refers to equality of rights and freedom for the people to exercise their fundamental rights. It was based on the belief “that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights, amongst which are (...) acquiring, possessing and protecting property.”⁹⁰ Also, it was clearly stipulated that “power” was “originally inherent in, and consequently, derived from the people.”⁹¹ During this period, the understanding of democracy excluded issues such as race/ethnicity and gender. These features of democracy will be emphasized in the pre-Second World War period, when the American notion of democratic liberty was reshaped in a more practical way, taking into consideration the geopolitical situation that led to the Cold War. In his *Practical Explanations and Practical Policies* radio broadcast speech from 1934, the American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt (president from 1933-1945) brought into public debate a new understanding of a reformed democracy -- a more pragmatic, economics-

⁸⁹ Robertson 936.

⁹⁰ “Constitution of Vermont, 1777,” *Freedom in America*, ed. Kenneth Bridges (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008) 121.

⁹¹ Bridges 121.

oriented approach in order “to meet the necessities of modern economic life.”⁹² In this speech he stated that economic reconstruction was the main task of a government “dominated by the humane ideals of democracy.”⁹³ Roosevelt’s program was crucial for future postwar mass production, which aimed to provide “better homes for the people of the Nation.”⁹⁴ Roosevelt was accused by American colleagues of “‘Fascism’, sometimes ‘Communism’ ”⁹⁵ because he advocated for government intervention in the free market. Ironically, this comparison with the opposing political system of the Soviet Union did not have a real basis, since the communist “socialist democracy” was based on the abolition of private property and the total control of the state party.

Socialism also represents a heterogeneous body of thoughts. According to Marxist ideology, socialism refers to a phase before the establishment of communism.

In relation to this, socialist democracy refers to a politico-economic system where the state controls and legally owns the means of production⁹⁶ and the political delegates are chosen on a pyramidal scheme, starting with small communities (that is, the soviets or the workers’ councils),⁹⁷ according to the principle of direct democracy. The Soviet Union

⁹² Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Practical Explanations and Practical Policies,” *Freedom in America*, ed. Kenneth Bridges (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008) 337.

⁹³ Roosevelt 337.

⁹⁴ Roosevelt 339.

⁹⁵ Roosevelt 339.

⁹⁶ Robertson 451.

⁹⁷ This is related to the Paris Commune (1871). Writing about it, Marx thought that “the majority of its members were naturally working men” who were “chosen by universal suffrage.” He linked the political organization of the commune to that of democracy. See

communist democracy was shaped by Vladimir Illich Lenin (head of state from 1917-1924). According to Lenin's socialist vision, as expressed in his *The State and Revolution* from 1917, "Democracy means equality. ... Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties."⁹⁸ Lenin defined class equality as abolition of social classes and equality of labour and wages. He associated democracy as a form of government with the political organization of the state structure, ascribing to it the political legitimacy of the masses' rule and their contribution to self-government. This theoretical model of egalitarian participation in state administration was applied to all Eastern countries from the communist bloc including the DDR. This played out in the form of a practical kind of democracy in which the ruling decisional force was represented by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (the SED or the German Socialist Unity Party). It is important to note the centrality of the notion of democracy for the socialist East Germany whose official name was the German *Democratic* Republic. The DDR took over this notion and proclaimed that:

Socialist democracy is characterized by the active participation of a vast proportion of the working population in public affairs, in decision-making on major issues and in solving social problems. ... Everyone has a say in this country.⁹⁹

Karl Marx, "The Paris Commune and 'Proletarian Dictatorship'," *Karl Marx: The Essential Writings*, ed. Frederic L. Bender (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986) 287-300. The Russian Soviets followed this idea.

⁹⁸ Inspired by the theoretical thinking of Karl Marx, Lenin, the Russian leader of what is generally considered the first communist state in history, carried further the notion of the proletariat in relation to the state. See V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory and the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution," *Selected Works* vol. 2 (New York; Moscow: International Publishers, 1967) 343.

⁹⁹ This quotation is extracted from a book, published in English by the First-Hand Information Department of the East German Panorama DDR publishing house and distributed through Western countries; it seemed to have a clear propagandistic aim of promoting Eastern socialist principles and achievements in the West. *What is Life in the*

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The theoretical egalitarian participation in the socialist country by members in its administration was transformed in a practical way into a hierarchical structure subordinated to the main party. The East German society, for example, was established on “a hierarchic, authoritarian basis” as one communist citizen declared in his memoirs.¹⁰⁰ According to Erich Honecker, the East German SED general secretary (1971-1989), as he was writing in *Report of the Central Committee to the Eight Congress [sic] of the SED* (1971), the DDR was a democracy that did “everything possible for the well-being of man, for the happiness of the people, for the interests of the working class and all working people.”¹⁰¹ Above all, he defined the DDR form of government both in terms of collectivism and of individualism: “The political power of the working class and its alliance with the working farmers is the highest form of democracy.”¹⁰² The communist system showed contradictions. In the 1950s, the totalitarian communist state created a powerful secret police that was directly subordinated to the SED and controlled

GDR? The Way of Life and Standard of Living under Socialism (Berlin: Panorama DDR, First-Hand Information Department, 1977) 37-38. Although published in the 1970s, it still holds relevance to my period of study because it contains the same ideas.

¹⁰⁰ The writer was an ex-DDR psychoanalyst who analyzed life under the repressive socialist system from a psychoanalytical perspective. For further noteworthy details about the East German lifestyle and the state dictatorial politics see Hans-Joachim Maaz, “‘Socialism as It Really Exists’: A Repressive System,” *Behind the Wall: The Inner Life of Communist Germany*, trans. Margo Bettauer Dembo (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995) 11.

¹⁰¹ See Erich Honecker, *Report of the Central Committee to the Eight Congress of the SED* (Dresden: Publishing House Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1971) 5.

¹⁰² Honecker 17.

all the private and public lives of its “free” citizens. This was the East German State Security Service, also known as the Stasi (*Staatssicherheit*).¹⁰³

The socialist principle of egalitarianism was theoretically applied to all components of communist life from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Design, as closely related to daily life, was looked at from an egalitarian perspective: everyone had egalitarian access to goods because “equality of all without discrimination is considered an important measure of living standards”¹⁰⁴ in East Germany. Theoretically, people had equal access to opportunities within the communist-socialist society. In practice, however, the manner in which this theoretical principle was implemented generated problems. Most of them were related to the degree of state control over the resources, production and creation of wares, the dearth of goods, the proclaimed good quality of products, and the uniform aesthetic of objects that were intended to satisfy undifferentiated needs of similar people. This situation arose because of state intervention into the centralized economy and design industry. As Penny Sparke has noted:

While a number of other democratic states supported design movements in the interwar years ... it was the totalitarian states of that period -- whether fascist or Bolshevik -- that exercised the greatest degree of state control over their economies and where design was totally dependent upon sponsorship from the state.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The Stasi was created according to the early Soviet model of the KGB; it was a repressive institution that used the East German population as informal collaborators against the allegedly oppositional activities in the DDR. The Stasi was implicated in assassinations of political dissidents. For more details see Mary Fulbrook, “The Honeycomb State: The Benign and Malign Diffusion of Power,” *The People’s State* (London: Yale University Press, 2005) 235-49.

¹⁰⁴ *What is Life in the GDR?* 23.

¹⁰⁵ See Penny Sparke, “Democracies and Dictatorships,” *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 88.

The practice of design within a “democratic centralism,” as Lenin termed it¹⁰⁶ was, in fact, a state-controlled activity dependent on political control. An underlying premise for the production of daily goods was the homogeneity of the people, the working class.

The notion of democracy, understood differently by both capitalist and communist systems, had become crucial by the time of the Cold War when democracy was highly polemicized with both West and East claiming supremacy. The West-East political debate over the capitalist or communist-socialist supremacy of democracy was imbued with the ideological struggle of these two major political systems. Each political regime strove to show itself as embodying “true” democracy. For example, Russia and other Eastern European countries accused the American state of “imperialism, as a special stage of capitalism;”¹⁰⁷ conversely, America accused Russia and its socialist satellites of “totalitarianism.” Their ideological dispute was confined within a dichotomous system of democratic values: the communist totalitarian state was accused in comparison to the democratic capitalist system, and the imperialist capitalist state was accused in comparison to communist socialist organization.

The theoretical concept of democracy contains complex ideas. One of these ideas refers to equality of rights and the fundamental right of human beings to self-governance.

¹⁰⁶ The notion of “democratic centralism” is the doctrine expressed by Lenin, “according to which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and most other communist parties, was traditionally run.” Theoretically, all the conflicting opinions should be freely expressed at all levels of the party hierarchy and they should be taken into account by the party central committee. In practice, the decision making process was highly controlled by the state party. So, the ideological need for a dictatorship of the proletariat, as expressed by Marx, was used to justify the authority of the ruling party. See Robertson 137. See V. I. Lenin, “What Is To Be Done,” *Selected Works* vol. 1 (New York; Moscow: International Publishers, 1967) 97-256.

¹⁰⁷ Lenin 744.

Both capitalist and socialist democracies proclaimed the rule of the people regardless of race, religion, gender, or social class. According to ideas concerning the comprehension of democratic design as set out in Chapter One, everyone would benefit from equal opportunities to social goods. Yet, one may find in each system contradictory facts and conflicting events that contravene the very idea claimed by a democracy. The degrees of infringement of democracies in both systems are different. Minorities such as the African-Americans and Native Americans suffered from public racial segregation and violent behaviour in postwar America.¹⁰⁸ People from the occupied European countries who did not share the communist Bolshevik ideals were persecuted, imprisoned, and “reeducated” in DDR forced-labour camps, organized according to the Soviet Gulag system.¹⁰⁹ Gender inequality was another issue manifested in both cases.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ For example, in his *National Address on Civil Rights* (1963), the American president John Kennedy said: “It ought to be possible for American consumers of any colour to receive equal service in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores” For an extensive historical overview of the concept of freedom containing a collection of public speeches, letters, and political writings on the civil rights for African-American people see *Freedom in America*, ed. Kenneth Bridges (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ See Karel Bartošek, “Central and Southeastern Europe,” *The Black Book of Communism. Crimes, Terror, Repression*, ed. Stéphanie Courtois et al (Cambridge, MA: London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999) 394-460.

¹¹⁰ Despite the official claims of women’s “emancipation”, the situation of East German women was problematic: they had lower social status and less control over their work in comparison to their male superiors; the female worker was seen as a producer. For the role of the communist women in the development of the DDR and the role of the SED as policymaker trying to legally raise their rights see Mary Fulbrook, “Gender,” *The People’s State* (London: Yale University Press, 2005) 141-75. This situation informed the case of female designers who were confined to work within traditional occupations (that is, weaving, pottery, or glassware design). For American women from 1940s to 1970s fighting against gender inequalities see Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

The legitimacy of democracy as a form of government based on egalitarian principles was questioned by scholars after the end of the Cold War (1989). For instance, Susan Buck-Morss questioned the idea of whether a democratic society, whether a liberal democracy or a Bolshevik dictatorship, can be compatible with a rule based on violence. Relevant to the current discussion concerning design, she speaks about “cultural developments of the twentieth century within opposed political regimes as variations of a common theme, the utopian dream that industrial modernity could and would provide happiness for the masses.”¹¹¹

Equal access within the process of government is crucial to the concept of democracy. Egalitarian participation in the process of accessing goods is crucial for design reception in order that it be democratic. Industrialization helped to democratize the access to goods.

Liberal-Capitalist and Communist Economic Systems

Two opposed economic models, one emphasizing production (in the DDR as a Soviet satellite country) and another focusing on consumption (in the case of the USA), faced off against each other in public and private spheres during the Cold War framework. The American capitalist system was based on the notion of *desire* within an economic model that was based on profit and *consumption*. The concept of a free market with liberated supply and demand centred on the idea of the centrality of private property and of private economic business that helped to enhance a strong economically

¹¹¹ See Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) xiv.

competitive climate. So, consumer goods were designed to create the desire to consume and the price was regulated by the market. Private initiative of manufacturers and retailers oriented towards the market, represented by the masses of purchasers, was a strong force in increasing the industrial production of design goods.

The legislative and industrial basis for this postwar economic development was created during the Roosevelt administration (1933-1945), an administration that had a great impact on the making of postwar America, which is part of my period of investigation. The New Deal policy introduced an expanded role for the government and its intervention in the economy.¹¹² In 1941, the American president advocated for a new world comprising basic things for American citizens such as “equality of opportunity for youth and for the others” and “the enjoyment of the fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living.”¹¹³ The aims of the Roosevelt administration were the achievement of industrial power and implementation of the social insurance system and federal government initiative.¹¹⁴ Postwar design mass production was stimulated by this government’s initiative to rouse the free market for private housing. The National Housing Act (1934) created the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which had a significant role in relation to developing housing demand. Also, the FHA

¹¹² For more details on the relation between free market and governmental regulation and on the New Deal see Gordon Lloyd, ed., *The Two Faces of Liberalism: How the Hoover-Roosevelt Debate Shapes the 21st Century* (Salem, MA: M&M Scrivener Press, 2007).

¹¹³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The Four Freedoms,” *Freedom in America*, ed. Kenneth Bridges (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008) 355.

¹¹⁴ For details about the national policy under Roosevelt and its implications see Nicolas Spulber, *Managing the American Economy, from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

administered the Second World War veterans' Bill of Rights (1944), as part of the New Deal legislation, one that promoted the concept of affordable postwar family housing.¹¹⁵ The low-priced housing boom generated a boom in the mass production of domestic goods. The Employment Act of 1946 was respected by following administrations as a cornerstone document for the United States postwar economy. The federal policy was focused on full employment, maximum production, and the consumers' financial power to buy. This economic situation, comprising state intervention within the private economic system on behalf of the national welfare in the wake of the depression, had crucial repercussions on the industrial mass production of domestic goods.

The abundance of mass-produced goods was clearly associated with capitalist democracy during the Eisenhower administration (1953-1961). The United States Information Agency (USIA, established in 1953) denounced American communists (that is, the McCarthy investigations), extolled the capitalist system and promoted democracy.¹¹⁶ In 1955, the term "people's capitalism" became a USIA propaganda theme, emphasizing material prosperity, technological innovations, individual opportunity, rising incomes, and the American middle class; the American worker was presented as successful and prosperous in opposition to the socialist worker.¹¹⁷ This

¹¹⁵ Avi Friedman, "The Evolution of Design Characteristics during the Post-Second World War Housing Boom: The US Experience," *Journal of Design History* 8.2 (1995) 131-46.

¹¹⁶ For further details about McCarthyism, disarmament, and the nuclear race, and the activity of the USIA in America in the 1960s, see Walter Hixson, "'People's Capitalism': USIA, Race Infiltrations, and Cultural Infiltration," *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 122.

¹¹⁷ Hixson 135.

central theme was used to present the American lifestyle including new automobiles, appliances, and so forth at international fairs. The propaganda campaign went so far as to claim that “class lines began to disappear,” and “almost everybody became a capitalist.”¹¹⁸

In opposition, the socialist model of economy was based on the principle of centralized planning, approved by the Communist Party, which addressed the volume and the structure of public and private consumer goods and services. The centralized economy was based on state administrative resource allocation as opposed to the free-market economy. The economy belonged to the people, according to the SED, and it was called “the people’s economy” (*die Volkswirtschaft*).¹¹⁹ The allocation of resources and the consumption provisioning were done accordingly to plan. The Soviet and Eastern European plan was set up according to a “definitive set of tasks which must be accomplished and which are binding as a law for society as a whole;”¹²⁰ this was in contradistinction to the Western practice where the economic plan is considered a forecast, a prognosis. A Two-Year Plan (1949-1950) was set up in East Germany in 1947, according to the Soviet economic practices, and it was followed by a Five-Year Plan (1951-1955) set up by Walter Ulbricht, the SED secretary general (1950-1971). Usually, the plan was drafted by the State Planning Commission within the Ministry of Trade and Provisioning. The goods serving the needs of the people were composed of

¹¹⁸ Hixson 139.

¹¹⁹ Schroeder 671.

¹²⁰ See Nicolas Spulber, “Schematic outline of a plan,” *The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1957) 282.

two categories: food (that is, bread) and semi-luxuries (that is, coffee, and manufactured commodities such as shoes, textiles, and so forth).¹²¹ The communist State Planning Commission decided on the kinds of goods that the consumers could buy.¹²² In June 1953, in Berlin East Germany, an event took place that has been called the uprising of the DDR citizens. The history of this uprising is very complex; in part, it was related to the East German labour movement against Stalinism.¹²³ In the context of this uprising, Ulbricht reconsidered the economy shifting it from total commitment to industrial productivity towards a consumer goods industry, and emphasized raising the standard of living. At the Fifth SED Congress in 1958, Ulbricht advocated social economic supremacy over the Western economy; he also insisted on overtaking West Germany in per-capita consumption as the “main economic task” (*die ökonomische Hauptaufgabe*).¹²⁴ In 1963, he urged a New Economic System (*Neues Ökonomisches System* or NÖS) based on a more efficient Seven-Year Plan. Heavy industry was the main economic activity involving the majority of the citizens, that is, the working-class.

¹²¹ Mark Landsman, “The Planned and the Unplanned: Consumer Supply and Provisioning Crisis,” *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) 81.

¹²² For an in-depth economic analysis on the socialist consumption see Phillip Bryson, *The Consumer under Socialist Planning: The East German Case* (New York: Praeger, 1984).

¹²³ More details may be found in Christian F. Ostermann and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2001).

¹²⁴ Schroeder 671.

Following Marx's theory of production, the goods were split into categories: "producer's goods industries and consumer's goods industries according to the destination of their output."¹²⁵ The whole idea of building the socialist and communist society, which was disseminated by Soviet Union leaders, was to be supported through productive industrial labour.¹²⁶ The entire conception of the Soviet-like industrial system and labour relations was implemented forcefully in the GDR after the end of the Second World War. Western scholars called this the phenomenon of "sovietization"¹²⁷ of the labour force and took place in East Germany, and elsewhere in Eastern bloc countries.

The centralized and hierarchical structure, which did not allow for the development of individual decision making in factories, also affected design. An intricate system of design research institutes and quality-approving entities governed the world of socialist design, controlling the conceptualization and production of design. For example, design creation, production, and quality approval in the GDR depended on official state bodies such as *die Zentralinstitut für Formgebung* (Central Institute for Design), created in 1963 as part of the socialist Ministry of Culture, or the DAMW -- *das Deutsches Amt für Messwesen und Warenprüfung* (German Office for Measurements and Goods

¹²⁵ Spulber, *Economics* 45.

¹²⁶ See Mark Pittaway, "A Society Based on Productive Labour," *Eastern Europe 1939-2000* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004) 87-108.

¹²⁷ "Sovietization" was defined as "the particular Soviet method of binding the worker to the factory, of refashioning the factory as a social and political ... institution." East German workers had to follow special work norms and to fully commit to construct the communist-socialist society. Jeffrey Kopstein, "Making Russians from Prussians: Labour and the State, 1945-1961," *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945-1989* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 19.

Testing), created as part of the Ministers' Council.¹²⁸ In addition, there was a combination of industrial centres with subordinated research institutes.

The East German communist state was the entity that, responsible with the supplier and distribution, commissioned goods through its state-owned factories and state-owned shops. The emphasis was put on *production* and *industrial productivity* of capital goods,¹²⁹ seen as tokens of socialist economy, over consumer goods. At the basis of the socialist economic system was the notion of *need*. Goods with state-controlled prices were produced and distributed in order to fulfill very basic human needs, as understood by the party (that is, foodstuff, clothes, and appliances). The SED considered that, in sharing and using the goods collectively, the working-class had uniform habits and undifferentiated, non-individual attitudes.

Industry was the centre of economic development. Technology that was closely related to industry, innovation and achievements was used as an economic and ideological weapon by both sides within the period of the Cold War. Technology was crucial for the military and space industries and the arms race (especially the nuclear race) that informed the Cold War rhetoric. Industrial mass production and other technological achievements were a means of propaganda used to help democratize the

¹²⁸ See Eli Rubin, "The Form of Socialism without Ornament. Consumption, Ideology, and the Fall and Rise of Modernist Design in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Design History* 19.2 (2006): 165.

¹²⁹ Capital goods (that is, tools, buildings, machinery, factories) refer to those means of production that are used to produce goods. Capital goods are different from consumer goods; consumer goods are final goods that are consumed by people.

general access to goods. The idea of a new kind of technology informed the socialist vision of the Communist Party that sought a “socialist technology.”¹³⁰

Middle Class and Working Class

Differentiation and goods diversification exist very little in the communist system; conversely, there is variety and goods multiplicity in the capitalist structure. The masses benefiting from industrial mass-produced goods were represented by the American middle class and the East German working class or the proletariat. The state ideology operated with the notion of social class, which needs to be deconstructed.

Eastern European society was defined within the communist system as being made of the proletariat. American society was defined within the capitalist system as being made generally of the middle class. Different from the Western European middle class in terms of values and custom, its American counterpart is characterized by other qualities such as the immigration issue and widespread economic opportunities.¹³¹ As such, in the nineteenth century, the American middle class built itself on the basis of liberal economic principles applied in a democratic organization. The liberal economy stimulated the application of personal abilities and original ideas, as in the case of Henry Ford in the 1920s. The notions of wealth and personal success, leading to class mobility, were important and originated in meritocracy. Historically, the American middle class

¹³⁰ See Raymond Stokes, “In Search of the Socialist Artefact: Technology and Ideology in East Germany, 1945-1962,” *German History* 15.2 (1997): 221-39.

¹³¹ For a detailed discussion on the making of the American middle class, starting with the values promoted by the first Puritan British immigrants, see Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

was defined in many ways by different scholars; but definitions related to income are the most used, introducing subcategories within the entire concept: upper middle class, lower middle class, white-collar and blue-collar middle class.¹³² The white-collar jobs required high education and training in the modern societies, being somewhere “in the middle” between the rich (owners and controllers of the capital) and the working class. The relationship between the working class and the middle class is problematic; in general, the working class is considered to be another class in addition to the middle class made of people who are non-owners of capital.¹³³ The notion of personal ability leads to class mobility within a society made of the rich, the middle class and the poor.

Later, after the Second World War, the American middle class received new ideological qualities. Impetus was given by the government in the context of the postwar economic reconstruction and the Cold War confrontation. This is the period of the creation of the “American dream” construct that defined itself as being accessible to every hard-working white American citizen; this construct was related to a child-oriented family having the home as “evidence of democratic abundance.”¹³⁴ The federal government stimulated suburban housing. The private manufacturers used this idea and

¹³² For a fascinating discussion on the notion of class as a modern construct, based on industrialization, capitalist economy, scientific knowledge and democracy, and the principles of social strata division according to Karl Marx and Max Weber see Leonard Beeghley, *The Structure of Social Stratification in the United States*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon, 2008).

¹³³ Beeghley 13.

¹³⁴ Elaine Tyler May, “The Commodity Gap: Consumerism and the Modern Home,” *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) 162.

reinforced the new concept of “the consumer-oriented ... suburban home.”¹³⁵ Therefore, the middle-class ideal based on income could be sketched as follows: the private ownership of a suburban home as the focus of a domestic universe that generated patterns of consumption.

Based on Marx’s theory, the socialist approach to social stratification within communist society was represented by the ideal model of an egalitarian classless social organization; in order to achieve this higher final phase, from the capitalist structure to the communist one, societies had to develop a revolutionary socialist structure comprising the working-class or the proletariat as the major social division. Exercising its power within a democratic system, the working-class theoretically ruled the communist socialist state under the guidance of the Communist Party. According to the Marxist assumption, the social classes were defined by the relationship between people and the means of production. According to Marx, the working class, or the proletariat,¹³⁶ was represented by those who did not “own” anything except their labour, which could be sold on the free market; these people, in a capitalist system, were exploited by the production capital owners, and therefore alienated.

The ideology concerning the working class, as advocated by Marx, was assumed and further incorporated in different ways by Lenin and then again by Stalin, and applied practically in East Germany and the other occupied countries from Europe, under the

¹³⁵ May 166.

¹³⁶ The term “proletariat” comes from the Roman *proletarii* meaning the poorest social stratum of those who have as possessions only their children or *proles*. See Aleksander Gella, *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and her Southern Neighbors* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 110.

strong influence of Soviet power. Communist leaders were trained by the party to advocate the idea of the industrial working class within a democratic society in which private property would be voluntarily eliminated and all people would own and share collectively and in equal parts the nation's wealth. But in practice, most of the urban and rural people from the DDR were forced to become the working-class through the abolition of private property, nationalization,¹³⁷ and forced agricultural collectivization.¹³⁸

The working class had needs to be fulfilled with goods provided by the centralized socialist economy. The proletariat was the hypothetical/abstract receiver of daily goods designed by socialist professionals and produced by socialist industry. In reality, in addition to the proletariat, the socialist society was made of a new social class called the *nomenklatura*¹³⁹ that developed in relation to the communist party hierarchy and Lenin's system of political relations. The *nomenklatura* was an elitist part

¹³⁷ Originating in the theoretical thinking of Marx, the process of nationalization in the case of the Soviet-occupied countries referred to the taking of firms, private companies and whole industries into public ownership; see Robertson 332; in addition, people were deprived of their houses and other private possessions such as jewellery.

¹³⁸ Collectivization is the process of the re-organization of the agricultural sector carried out by Stalin in a communist way; the main aim was "to gain legal control of the land" that was owned by rich peasants called "kulaks." Stalin re-organized the agricultural sector in collective farms in which the peasants were employed. The industrial workers were employed in the state-controlled and centrally-planned industrial factories. See Robertson 87.

¹³⁹ The *nomenklatura* was a new social class that developed within the hierarchical Soviet regime which was characterized by bureaucracy, nepotism, and hierarchical structure. The *nomenklatura* was composed of party political leaders, being in reality the party's oligarchy. For a detailed insight into this phenomenon in Russia see Michael Voslenskii, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984). On the DDR *nomenklatura* see Mary Fulbrook, "The Withering Away of the State? Ruling Elites," *The People's State* (London: Yale University Press, 2005) 179-194.

socialist state as being “nothing but a life of luxury for the few, paid by the majority
”¹⁴²

Socialist Soviet-driven thinking about the ideal working class reveals a complex reality. This is partially due to the fact that the East German proletariat, as the main class of the socialist society established in 1947, was constructed on the basis of the old society that was anything but communist or socialist. For example, the majority of the German population was represented by middle-class bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Newly appearing at the beginning of the twentieth century, the German working-class was part of the stratified social system. In 1945, after the official split of Europe in capitalist West and Soviet-dominated Eastern European countries, Stalinist ideas were applied to the occupied states. The traditional social structure was changed forcefully by the elimination of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.¹⁴³ Members of the proletariat, who were supposed to benefit from all the goods produced by the socialist economy, reacted differently. They did not consume the socialist goods in the manner that the communist state expected them to. Their consumption habits reflected a strained situation between production and the real demand of people's needs. As such, scholars have observed that:

As in all the states of the Soviet bloc the running discrepancy in East Germany between the regime's public promises to meet the material needs of its citizens

¹⁴² Quoted in Ina Merkel, “Consumer Culture in the GDR, or How the Struggle for Antimodernity Was Lost on the Battleground of Consumer Culture,” *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Strasser Susan, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Jutd (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 286.

¹⁴³ The working class was created by forcing the peasantry to move from the rural areas to the urban ones. This process was unnatural for many people, and the newly created working class did not behave in a unified manner then or thereafter.

and the chronic dearth of consumer goods called into question the political legitimacy of socialism on a daily basis.¹⁴⁴

There was an uneasy relationship between people's real needs and their hidden desire for Western commodities. For example, in the immediate years after the war, a "housewife" attending a German furniture trade fair in Leipzig (1947) criticized the image of abundance in opposition to the reality and the little money that communist citizens had:

In the Fair pavilions it was like a bath for the eyes to find so many beautiful things together at one time. Glass, porcelain, ceramics.... How did the new furniture look? ... Nowhere does one see a truly fitting solution to one-room apartment [sic], in which so many are living today.... Maybe the next Fair will offer that which we are missing now and will match -- also in the prices -- the needs and possibilities of our current lives.¹⁴⁵

Non-socialist attitudes as complex patterns of consumption developed in relation to Western everyday goods. Also, members of the *nomenklatura* and *intelligentsia* developed Westernized patterns of consumption. Sometimes, the capitalist products were imbued with a different social meaning because these capitalist products helped the socialist owners to differentiate themselves from the rest. Elitism and social differentiation developed in contradiction to the communist ideology of the working class. For example, "West German hair shampoo, regardless of the brand, had such a distinctive value for certain people that empty shampoo bottles were lined up in the bathroom like icons for guests."¹⁴⁶ They were a symbol of otherness; of another kind of

¹⁴⁴ See Mark Landsman, Introduction, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) 2.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Katherine Pence, "'A world in miniature': The Leipzig Trade Fairs in the 1950s and East German Consumer Citizenship," *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. David F. Crew (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003) 33.

¹⁴⁶ Merkel 284.

prosperous life-style; as well as a sign of personal identity and self-complacency. In East Germany, communist citizens, as members of the working class, were allowed the following possessions: “one’s small apartment, a wall unit for the living room, a washing machine, a television set, and a ‘Trabi’.”¹⁴⁷ In this situation, citizens were forced to buy the same kinds of austere goods, to consume the same kinds of products that were characterized by scarcity. Being treated alike and wanting more goods to satisfy their daily needs made people desire Western goods. East German people praised Western goods for fulfilling human necessities of living and for providing a means to differentiate the working people.

The relationship between private space and public space was different within both ideological constructs -- middle class and working class -- in regard to consumption. For example, in communist totalitarian societies, the citizen was forced to spend as much time as possible outside his/her private home space. Mass gatherings represent one of the most powerful means of propaganda of the dictatorial state. Interestingly, the application of this idea can be seen in the manner in which people had access to daily goods. Due to the dearth of products, the so-called centralized economy, and the distribution of goods, citizens developed unusual behaviours including searching for goods and lining up for hours in order to buy all goods accessible on the socialist market. East German scholars

¹⁴⁷ Trabi is the short name for the East German car, Trabant (or *der Trabi*), for which people registered on waiting lists; see Hans-Joachim Maaz, “Compensating for the Deficiency Syndrome,” *Behind the Wall: The Inner Life of Communist Germany* trans. Margo Bettauer Dembo (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995) 85. The name of Trabant (the Satellite) was given to celebrate the first launch of the Soviet *Sputnik* spacecraft (1957). A later model for the *Trabant* car as a relevant example for the “socialist car” (*das sozialistische Auto*) was re-designed by Clauss Dietel and Lutz Rudolph. See Jens Kassner, “Die Trabant-Tragödie,” *Clauss Dietel und Lutz Rudolph -- Gestaltung ist Kultur* (Chemnitz: Ed. Vollbart, 2002) 67-9.

compared this kind of behaviour to the hunting and gathering activities developed by primitive tribes.¹⁴⁸

The distribution system affected the practices of consumption. Patterns of consumption in both economic systems functioned differently within different social stratification. Western scholars noted that, despite the postwar forced-collectivization and nationalization of the means of products within socialist Eastern bloc, the traditional pre-war European mode of consumption still influenced the state- controlled socialist economy; this prewar custom was based on small-scale retail and old class hierarchies (feudal aristocracy, bourgeoisie) that reinforced the pyramidal structure of social stratification. In contrast, the postwar American mode of consumption reflected the newly constituted middle class, the industrial standardization related to Fordism and large retail organizations.¹⁴⁹ As such, postwar American ideology against communist Soviet closed economies “advanced a notion of democracy that put consumer choices and satisfaction at the center of reconstruction.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Merkel 293. People were in a continuous search; instead of being armed with primitive tools, they always had with them a plastic shopping bag. This was a widespread habit in the Eastern bloc. For more details about the Russian shopping bag called *avos'ka* see Susan E. Reid, “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev.” *Slavic Review* 61.2 (2002): 212.

¹⁴⁹ Victoria de Grazia, “Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930-1970: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem,” *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 59-83.

¹⁵⁰ Grazia 79.

Conclusion

Democracy, as the rule of the people and the equality of their rights, has many interpretations in world history; the specific forms of “democracy,” examined here, a liberal and a socialist one, turned into an ideological encounter between the capitalist West, driven firmly by the American rule and by communist-socialist Eastern European states during the Cold War. The influence of the democratization principle, understood as equal opportunities for all people to social, economic, and political activities, was projected to the design world, which was closely linked to industrial efficiency and dominance. Design took part in the complex network of socio-economic issues governed by national policies. Due to the Cold War ideological clash, design revealed itself as an ideological construct defined by “democratic” qualities of each political system. The relationship between democracy and design was difficult. The process of design in the DDR, dependent on the communist state sponsorship and control was governed by the centralization rule applied to the whole system.

Extolling the notion of the equality of rights for all its citizens, the capitalist form of democracy and the communist socialist one scrutinized each other, pointing out the presumed flaws of the other system. Varied visions on social hierarchy, property, ownership of capital, and class separation helped to create a specific image of the rival system. World supremacy in terms of military power underpins the Cold War period; as such, the sense of danger and (nuclear) threat characterized and gave urgency to Cold War rhetoric. It was this ideologically-imbued thinking about the other political doctrine allied with democracy that partially shaped the concept of “democratic design.” It was the

reception of mass design goods within the system that added a new dimension to design and gave an internal glimpse into the political system.

Each political system, claiming to offer equal rights to all citizens, showed cases of inequalities, when minorities were disregarded by the majority. According to the postwar American perception, the notion of democracy as related to design addressed this complex situation in which the masses were represented by the newly developed postwar middle class. It revealed an exclusionist aspect in terms of equal access and reception of goods within a liberal democracy for all citizens. In the DDR, a socialist satellite country influenced by Soviet rule, democratic design revealed an exclusionist aspect and a uniform aspect within a socialist democracy where all people were supposed to act similarly. According to the official rhetoric, goods were produced by the people, for the entire people of the socialist republic, and the producers were the consumers. The explanation for the uniform, unchanged approach referred to the people's lifestyle; the people who criticized the scarcity of the wares were looking to the Western world and its appealing consumer products.

The communist state controlled the kinds of goods that were distributed on the socialist market and, so, the availability of consumer choices was restricted according to the "standards of living" proclaimed by the ruling communist party. The state production and distribution controlled the consumption. This practice of the "democratic" republic, ruled by the unofficial elitist *nomenklatura*, which was a minority, dictated the opportunities and possibilities of choice for the majority of consumers, composed of the working class; the members of the working class benefited theoretically from the egalitarian access to goods, but the state controlled the number of choices, as it controlled

the materials and the production. This seems similar to a kind of control being placed on American consumers by the controllers of capital, the rich. The phenomenon of theoretical access to goods and services by all also developed in the American liberal democracy where the minorities did not in practice have equal access to wares like the rest of the white majority of citizens (moreover, many poor whites were excluded economically from experiencing the “American Dream” due to lack of capital).

Chapter 3: American Policy, Design, and the Role of Charles and Ray Eames: A

Case Study of Capitalist Democratic Design

The post-Second World War capitalist model of the American economy greatly influenced industrial production and domestic consumption. Design was associated by official policy makers with the values of “liberal democracy,” as shown in Chapter Two. Design-related organizations such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MOMA) promoted modern design principles within the American democracy and organized national competitions supported by manufacturers. The American economy was profit-driven, encouraging the idea of planned obsolescence, and professional industrial designers had a difficult role. Charles and Ray Eames, independent designers and a married couple, who worked together from 1941 to 1978, took a democratic approach to design, aiming to serve the needs of the majority. It was a human need-centred approach that focused on high-quality, low-priced, mass-produced items for everyday use.

This chapter discusses the American situation in relation to “democratic design” principles as analyzed in Chapter One. It also considers the relationship among American policy makers, manufacturers, and the practice and role of Charles and Ray Eames from the late 1940s to late 1960s. The way their design ideas functioned in respect to state ideology is also examined here.

During this discussion, I am referring to Charles and Ray Eames’s design as an equal partnership. As Pat Kirkham has shown, Ray’s situation was uneasy as a woman, artist, and wife of a well-known male designer.¹⁵¹ Her creative contribution and design

¹⁵¹ For a deeper analysis of the role played by Ray in the Eames design team see Pat Kirkham, “The Personal, the Professional, and Partner (ship): Exploring the Husband/Wife Collaboration of Charles and Ray Eames, designers and film-makers,

credits were minimized and, many times, ignored by manufacturers (for example, their furniture pieces were advertised as “his”) and the MOMA (in 1946 MOMA organized an exhibition entitled *New Furniture Designed by Charles Eames* where, in fact, shown pieces were designed collaboratively). In addition, Charles himself signed all articles and writings expressing their ideas on design, while he always referred to “we,” implying him and Ray.¹⁵² The important US locations for this specific discussion are California where the Eames established their home and design studio (Los Angeles and Venice), New York where they competed within the MOMA competitions and exhibitions, and Michigan state in the midwest where the Eames studied at Cranbrook Academy (in Detroit) and collaborated for a long time with the furniture manufacturer Herman Miller (in the small town of Zeeland).

Economic Growth, Consumption, and Design

In postwar America, the economy was profit-driven, with two important periods each having distinct economic growth policies: 1945-1960 and 1961-1974. Both periods were influenced by John Maynard Keynes’s economic analysis concerning a mixed

USA, 1941-1978,” *Feminists Produce Cultural Theory*, ed. Beverley Skeggs (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) 207-226.

¹⁵² Their partnership and the role of Ray in their husband-wife professional life clearly raise gender questions that relate to the design field as a whole. These questions, however, while underpinning this study in a general sense, fall outside the specific scope of my current research. For a complex image of the situation of American women designers in regards to race and gender inequalities, education, and civil rights see Pat Kirkham, ed., *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). For another excellent discussion on women and design in Great Britain from the Arts and Crafts Movement to the 1960s see Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham, eds., *A View from the Interior: Women & Design* 2nd ed. (London: Women's Press, 1995).

economic system in which the production and demand for goods are determined by the interactions between markets and government programs.¹⁵³ Briefly, the British economist stated that a certain standard of income and prices was essential for consumption and, therefore, for stimulating demand, production, and employment. That generated income transfers, government intervention, and the expansion of consumption.

The legacy of the Roosevelt administration (1933-1945) concerning employment, production, and consumption, influenced the profit-driven American economic model.¹⁵⁴ Added to this situation were Cold War politics that, by the 1950s were a major component of the United States' foreign policy. These politics engulfed the design field, which became a means of communicating abroad specific qualities of the postwar democratic American way of life, as shown in Chapter Two: a prosperous living for the middle class, affordability of modern domestic design products, habitation centred round a standard home and (white) family, and freedom of choice.

The American industrial designer and design historian Arthur Pulos has noted how the economic changes driven by national policy-makers had a great impact on design quality and quantity. For example, in the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration promoted the National Recovery Act of 1932 establishing "'floors' on the prices of manufactured products"; then, in 1942, Roosevelt established the opposite -- "price

¹⁵³ Keynes rejected the classical economic theory centred round the idea of a self-regulating system. See Nicolas Spulber, "Keynesian vs. Non-Keynesian Approaches to Policy," *Managing the American Economy, from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 28-39.

¹⁵⁴ For a detailed analysis of Western literature in economic growth during the Cold War period see Nicolas Spulber, "Growth-Oriented Policies," *Managing the American Economy, from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 51-88.

‘ceilings’ on manufactured goods” -- in order to cut inflation¹⁵⁵ and price limits to conserve materials. Manufacturers, in order to survive on the competitive market, re-orientated towards the appearance and style of objects, neglecting functionality and product improvement. According to Pulos, state control was not beneficial for a normal economic flow:

This disrupted the normal swing, in a free economy, between a buyer’s market (which favours the consumer) and a seller’s market (which, as has been demonstrated again and again in Third World and socialist countries, substantially reduces pressure on the manufacturer to improve his product and deprive the citizens of the freedom of choice).¹⁵⁶

Comparing the capitalist economic system with the socialist one and clearly writing from a position within the former, Pulos emphasized the importance of a non-state-controlled manufacturing system for a free market. He considered state intervention in respect to prices to pose an impediment to competition among producers, resulting in a loss of quality of products and a limitation of the consumers’ choices.

Economic growth was associated with freedom and stability. The abundance of mass-produced objects was considered a sign of prosperity and personal achievement. The more stable the income of the family, the more stable the consumption habit of everyday wares destined to serve people’s needs. Consumption was also stimulated by the consumer credit and credit card system introduced in 1950.¹⁵⁷ As Nigel Whiteley has

¹⁵⁵ See Arthur Pulos, *The American Design Adventure, 1940-1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) 13.

¹⁵⁶ Pulos 14.

¹⁵⁷ For more details about the history of the consumer credit card as a concept that originated in America in the nineteenth century see Lewis Mandell, *The Credit Card Industry: A History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990).

noted about the postwar American society, “In less than a quarter of a century the American economic system had shifted from one based on scarcity and need, to one based on abundance and desire. The keynote of the system was high consumption....”¹⁵⁸ The idea of encouraging the disposal of products in order to buy another updated model, in other words, a planned obsolescence, became part of marketing strategies and generated new patterns of consumption. Many designers played a role in this. “There is only one reason for hiring an industrial designer, and that is to increase the sales of a product,” wrote the industrial designer Joshua Gordon Lippincott in 1947.¹⁵⁹ As Whiteley has noted, this tendency came to be associated with the notion of democracy. “High consumption and obsolescence were *democratic* because the prosperous middle-class consumer traded in last year’s model for the new dream that money can buy”¹⁶⁰

Within this context, professional industrial designers were in a difficult position. Their relation to the final user, in terms of problem-solving, was mediated by government, producers, and corporations. The design scene of the 1950s and 1960s was, therefore, complex; there were profit-driven designers such as Raymond Loewy, and (albeit far fewer) visionary innovators such as Richard Buckminster Fuller not to mention many variations within the profession between the two. Within this environment, some designers, as in the case of Charles and Ray Eames, also had commercial success with their democratic design philosophy. The Eames’ market success and democratic and

¹⁵⁸ For an excellent discussion on postwar consumerism, planned obsolescence, and design used as a social status sign see Nigel Whiteley, “Toward a Throw-Away Culture, Consumerism, ‘Style Obsolescence’ and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Oxford Art Journal* 10.2 (1987): 3-27.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Whiteley 6.

¹⁶⁰ Whiteley 6.

need-oriented understanding of design for the majority were consolidated against this specific, American consumption-oriented and industry-connected background of design politics.

Charles (1907-1978) and Ray Eames (1912-1988) met in 1940 at the Cranbrook Academy of Arts in Detroit.¹⁶¹ In 1941, they moved to Los Angeles, California, where they lived and worked as a couple. They, arguably, are known as the most significant American designers of the twentieth century.¹⁶² The Eames designed famous pieces of furniture (chairs, sofas, tables, folding screens, storage units), the Eames House in Pacific Palisades (1945-1949), aircraft components and exhibitions (for the American government and corporations), showrooms, Christmas ornaments, and children's furniture and toys. They created short films on design and scientific issues, multimedia presentations, acting as communicators and educators. The Eames's unique vision on design was based on a user-centred, need approach to design (focusing on a "'human' solution"¹⁶³) applied to industrially mass-produced objects. Alongside their focus on technological experiments and industrial production, as will be discussed, their design was imbued with a craft component and a pleasurable side. Charles and Ray Eames

¹⁶¹ Charles studied but did not complete architectural training at Washington University in St. Louis (1925-1928); Ray studied fine art with Hans Hofmann in New York and was a founding member of American Abstract Artists (1936). For their biographies and an exhaustive detailed list of projects see John Neuhart, Marilyn Neuhart, and Ray Eames, *Eames Design* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989). This book was published after their deaths because Charles refused to allow them to be written about during their careers. John Neuhart worked in the Eames studio in the 1950s and the 1960s.

¹⁶² See Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames, Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) 1.

¹⁶³ Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames* 1.

focused on good quality, low-priced pieces of furniture for the people, especially in the period of 1945-1955, a period during which Charles and Ray Eames “stood firmly in this tradition of democratic design.”¹⁶⁴ By the end of the 1960s, they were increasingly oriented towards information design and filmmaking which also has a democratic component in terms of availability and reception.

The Museum of Modern Art: Modern Design and Democratic Life

The beginning of the public career of Charles and Ray Eames as professional designers is linked to the 1940s competitions on design organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Public design policy was framed within a network of design specialists, museums, design magazines, and professional organizations that highlighted the significance of industrial production, mass consumption, and what was considered to be modern design. Founded in 1929,¹⁶⁵ the Museum of Modern Art, a museum that was chiefly involved in contemporary fine arts, became the promoter of “modern” living and of design products which were considered useful consumer goods. Annual design exhibitions of these useful low-priced objects, held particularly during the Christmas season, reflected MOMA policy for “encouraging and developing the study of modern

¹⁶⁴ See Pat Kirkham, “The Evolution of the Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman,” *The Eames Lounge Chair: An Icon of Modern Design*, Martin Eidelberg et al. (London; New York: Grand Rapids Art Museum in association with Merrell, 2006) 43.

¹⁶⁵ For details about the founding of the MOMA see Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). Alfred Barr Jr., an art historian and the first director of MOMA (1929-1968), and Philip Johnson, later a significant American architect, organized the important exhibition *Machine Art* in 1934, and published a catalogue in which they discussed industry as part of culture.

arts and the application of such arts to manufacture and practical life.”¹⁶⁶ For example, the exhibition *Useful Objects of American Design under \$10* was held in Dec. 1939-Jan. 1940.

MOMA’s Department of Industrial Design was founded in 1940.¹⁶⁷ In 1946, the MOMA hired Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.,¹⁶⁸ as head of the industrial design department. He organized more complex shows of useful objects and design competitions to educate, to raise awareness about design, and to encourage cooperation between designers and industry. Interestingly, MOMA’s Department of Industrial Design took up the role provided earlier and elsewhere in history by organizations such as the *Deutsche Werkbund*. In 1946, Kaufmann wrote in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* that “never before has design been so influential, its study so complex, or its evaluation more necessary.”¹⁶⁹ He also stated, “Sales are episodes in the careers of designed objects. Use is the first consideration, production and distribution second.”¹⁷⁰ Important to this

¹⁶⁶ Quote from the provisional Charter granted to MOMA in 1929 by the New York State of Regents. Quoted in Paola Antonelli, “Objects of Design,” *Objects of Design from the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003) 11.

¹⁶⁷ It followed the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design established in 1935 by Philip Johnson. From 1940 to 1946 the Department of Industrial Design was run by Eliot Noyes (1910-1977), an important American architect and industrial designer, who had worked with Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer in the 1940s. As director at MOMA, Noyes initiated the idea of honouring designers for their projects. See Pulos 68.

¹⁶⁸ Kaufmann Jr. was an architect trained in Vienna; his father owned Kaufmann’s, a department store in Pittsburgh.

¹⁶⁹ Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., “The Department of Industrial Design,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 14.1 (1946): 2.

¹⁷⁰ Kaufmann Jr., “The Department of Industrial Design” 3.

discussion, Kaufmann was influential in Charles and Ray Eames's early career, providing them with "work, supported projects, and championed his efforts."¹⁷¹

MOMA's Department of Industrial Design aimed at "effectively to recommend to the general public the best modern design" using "the most effective means of reaching the general public -- exhibition, publication, other media."¹⁷² As such, Kaufmann wanted to educate as many people as possible and to shape their taste on everyday design, promoting a strong connection between "good design" and "good taste."¹⁷³ The notion of taste was related to the educational principles explained in the museum's catalogues and bulletins from the 1940s and 1950s, which talked about functionality, pleasurable aesthetics, consumption and technological progress. It was during Kaufmann's mandate that the Eames name became associated with good-quality modern furniture for everyday use that was low priced and mass produced.

The practical objectives expressed in the MOMA's publications were intended to elevate design objects as useful beautiful things and to endorse modern design as part of American democratic life. The notion of "good design" was elaborated and disseminated as a requirement related to new postwar living. Kaufmann launched what he called the Good Design Program in 1950 to promote the idea that good design is related to postwar

¹⁷¹ Neuhart 9. Neuhart only refers to Charles here; it is clear, however, that both designers were involved equally in these activities.

¹⁷² Kaufmann, Jr., "The Department of Industrial Design" 2.

¹⁷³ According to Kaufmann, in 1949 there were American museums of art that "held exhibitions of applied art to guide the public toward good taste in objects available for purchase." Quoted in Tina di Carlo, "Good Design," *Objects of Design from the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003) 187.

modern life and yet also related to the past.¹⁷⁴ Published in 1950, the publication *What is Modern Design?* by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., as a part of MOMA's *Introductory Series to the Modern Arts* - 3, explained to the reader in simple, straight-forward, and illustrated writing that people should focus on design as the activity of "conceiving and giving form to objects used in everyday life."¹⁷⁵ Kaufmann proclaimed that modern design was about "objects suited to our ways of life, our abilities, our ideals,"¹⁷⁶ yet connected to mass production and technological progress. The publications were reinforced visually by illustrations from exhibitions, including work by the Eames. Interestingly, this is the period when Pevsner's influential book on canonical modern design history, first published in England in 1936 as shown in Chapter One, was re-published by MOMA (1949). As Pevsner has noted in his *Foreword to the Second Edition*, Kaufmann, among others, was helpful "for suggestions as to what should be altered and added."¹⁷⁷

Kaufmann stated that "modern industrial design springs from an application of the principles of modern design to the needs of an industrialized community."¹⁷⁸ In *What is*

¹⁷⁴ The Good Design Program (1950-1955) was related to modern design and promoted household objects and furnishings. MOMA collaborated with the Merchandise Mart of Chicago in order to attract manufacturers of modern furnishings. Charles and Ray Eames created the installation for the first Good Design exhibition (Jan. 1950). Pulos, "The 'Good Design' Syndrome," *The American Design Adventure, 1940-1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) 110-121.

¹⁷⁵ See Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., *What is Modern Design?* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1950) 5.

¹⁷⁶ Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design* 7.

¹⁷⁷ Pevsner 16. Moreover, Pevsner acknowledged that "the Museum of Modern Art has increased the scope of this book considerably by raising the total number of illustrations from 84 to 137."

¹⁷⁸ Kaufmann, "The Department of Industrial Design" 2.

Modern Design?, twelve principles of modern design, called “precepts” were presented to readers in order to help them understand design related to the new American society. Rather than being a historical phenomenon, the term “modern” applied to life and design is seen as expressing “the spirit of our time,” a postwar period, overcoming successfully the Great Depression; in general, these precepts dealt with major issues such as “practical needs of modern life,” mass production, use of new materials, functionality, and simplicity.¹⁷⁹ Kaufmann, the head of the Department of Industrial Design at MOMA, as design policy-maker, decided what the viewer-user-buyer should see as useful design goods and what good design was. The last “precept” of modern design, preached by the MOMA, revealed a democratic, non-exclusive approach to design in terms of accessibility of goods: “Modern design should serve as *wide a public as possible*, considering *modest needs* and *limited costs* no less challenging than the requirements of pomp and luxury [emphasis added].”¹⁸⁰ The accessibility of daily wares was intended to be broad, the price low, and the object useful to human needs; and, Kaufmann emphasized, in opposition to expensive products made for wealthy people, these modern design goods were for average people. A medium income would have given people the opportunity to buy what was considered modern, useful, and affordable for them. The more that people had access to buy daily goods, the more consumption there would be. Production was important and the idea of form-revealing methods of mass production was significant, as explained in one of the precepts: “Modern design should express the

¹⁷⁹ A full list of them is reproduced in Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., *What is Modern Design?* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1950) 7.

¹⁸⁰ Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 7.

methods used to make an object, not disguising mass production as handicraft or simulating a technique not used.”¹⁸¹ Moreover, in Kaufmann’s opinion, widely broadcast by the publications and activities developed by MOMA, modern design is a “necessity” within “this highly industrialized world where democratic societies are engaged in a formidable struggle to survive”¹⁸² Part of the Cold War framework is emerging from Kaufmann’s writings in which the connection between modern design and American democracy is reinforced. Kaufmann explained that “modern design is part of the democratic life ... to implement the lives of free individuals.”¹⁸³ He addressed “the average person,” stressing the idea that “modern design embodies the values of our age, bases on democracy and industrialization.”¹⁸⁴

During Kaufmann’s period as head (1946-1955), the Department of Industrial Design at the MOMA promoted modern daily design for the average citizen of a democratic society; in other words, design for as many Americans as possible; design that was mass produced and, therefore, low cost; modern design designated to serve people’s needs and to help improve their lives; modern design that was incontrovertibly linked to American democratic values, industry, manufacturers, and, as a result, to the liberal capitalist economic model. Most of the visual examples of chairs, tables, and storage

¹⁸¹ Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 7.

¹⁸² Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 7.

¹⁸³ Kaufmann also talked about ideas such as design which is different from art and engineering, artificial changes of style, the importance of handicraft for producing “preliminary models for the machine.” The audience was guided towards “recommended reading on modern design” on subjects such as design in the United States and Europe etc. Part of the suggested bibliography dedicated to the American modern design was also issued by MOMA. Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 8; 31.

¹⁸⁴ Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 8.

cabinets in the *What is Modern Design?* catalogue were Bauhaus works (chairs made by Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe in 1928 and 1929) and Charles Eames's creations. The now- famous classic Lounge Chair Metal (LCM) from 1946 (Figure 1) was already talked about in 1950 as “the original, widely-used Eames chair,”¹⁸⁵ suggesting the idea that the reception of the LCM was already broad, at least for the American consumer. The Eames molded plywood chairs had metal finishes (chrome or black), wood finishes (for example, birch, oak, etc.) and fabric or leather upholstery. Made of separate seat and back plywood units, these chairs were moulded to the contours of the human body; they had minimal details and a simple structure suitable for standardized mass production. The story of designing this chair, perfected in four versions (metal- or wood-legged chairs, for dining-room and for lounge, Figure 2), which is probably among the most famous creations by the Eames, tells the story of the Eames as designers focused on human need and democratic attributes of design: high quality, low price, mass production, and mass availability.

The Eames: Democratization of Design

This famous chair, the Lounge Chair Metal, made of separate standardized molded plywood shells and rubber shock mounts using special welding technology,¹⁸⁶ owes its public exposure to the MOMA. The Eames's professional reputation and their design were brought to public attention in 1940 when Charles Eames, in collaboration with Eero Saarinen, took part at the Organic Design in Home Furnishings competition

¹⁸⁵ Kaufmann, *What is Modern Design?* 11.

¹⁸⁶ Neuhart 60-1.

organized by MOMA with the help of Ira Hirshman, a Bloomingdale's executive who gained financial support for the project from several department stores. A condition of the competition was that the winning entry would be manufactured and offered for sale; however, this wasn't put into practice due to the Second World War.¹⁸⁷ The Eames won first prize for seating (Figure 3) and case goods for the living room.¹⁸⁸ Charles recognized the importance of MOMA's initiative and cooperation with manufacturers: "The opportunity was a rare one because of the unique phase of the competition which provided contact with manufacturers and an outlet for winning designers."¹⁸⁹ Charles further explained that "Priorities and the time limitations forced many compromises, but the Museum of Modern Art, ... broadened the horizon of an industry ...;" unfortunately, the cost was too high and "those for whom the furniture was intended could look but not afford to buy."¹⁹⁰ The efficient solution was to use mass "production of forms originally conceived as wood handicraft."¹⁹¹ This is why the Eames thought of conceiving a molded plywood chair in 1940; but it took six years of experiments with plywood-molding techniques to perfect the first prototypes (Figure 4). As Charles Eames later declared,

In the late thirties and forties *we* were working on molded plywood techniques, and this was a very expensive procedure that could be used for airplanes. *We* were concerned about being able to make compound curves in a way that would *be less expensive*. ... We had committed ourselves ... to do a chair ... that would be self-

¹⁸⁷ Caplan 56.

¹⁸⁸ This competition was juried, among others, by Alvar Aalto and Marcel Breuer. Neuhart 25.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Eames, "Organic Design," *California Arts and Architecture* Dec. (1941): 17.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Eames, "Organic Design" 17.

¹⁹¹ Charles Eames, "Organic Design" 17.

explanatory as you looked at it -- no mysteries, so that the techniques of how it was made would be part of the aesthetics [emphasis added].¹⁹²

Interestingly, this goes back to the above-mentioned precept on modern design, as explained by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., in 1950. Moreover, Charles Eames appears to have been thinking of designing this chair without having a client to ask for this commission, according to what he felt people needed. From 1940 to 1946, Charles and Ray researched and tested the molded plywood technique with their own hands, in their apartment in Los Angeles, where they built a mechanical device to mold plywood. By 1946, the Eames developed plywood splints for the American navy and produced them in cooperation with the manufacturer Evans Products Company. Also, by 1946, the Eames produced many plywood prototypes with different leg solutions (three and four) that would be suited for assembly-line production.

The key factor that helped to mass produce the Eames plywood chair is that, in 1946, Charles Eames benefited from a solo furniture exhibition also held at MOMA. The small MOMA exhibition brought Eames's furniture to the attention of the furniture retailer Herman Miller who bought the rights to produce the plywood chair from Evans Products.¹⁹³ It is this MOMA exhibition that caused the Eames plywood chair to be successfully mass produced, and which made them famous. It is somehow ironical that, at the end of his life in 1977, Charles Eames found "frustrating" the idea of exhibiting in a

¹⁹² More about chairs as small-scale architecture and the patent issue is explained by Charles Eames in an interview made in 1977, a year before his death. The interviewer was Owen Gingerich, professor of astronomy and the history of science at Harvard and consultant on several Eames exhibitions. See Owen Gingerich, "A Conversation with Charles Eames," *American Scholar* 46.3 (1977): 328.

¹⁹³ See Ralph Caplan, *The Design of Herman Miller* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976) 44.

museum because “it widens the gap between what is in the museum and what is the business of life for the viewer.”¹⁹⁴ Finally, history tells us that Herman Miller Furniture Company adopted the Eames and their projects as recommended by the designer George Nelson, who already worked for this manufacturer and retailer.¹⁹⁵

There is an ambiguous relationship between MOMA and the Eames in the early 1950s. It is not clear why the MOMA chose to use the Eames almost like a modern design visual trademark to promote its own democratic approach to daily goods. The manner in which the Eames explained their design philosophy in relation to MOMA competitions suggests shared ideas. The most significant ones refer to qualities attributed to modern design as part of the American democracy. As such, Kaufmann, as head of the Department of Industrial Design at MOMA, and Charles and Ray Eames managed to change people’s attitudes on modern design. The strategy of promoting modern design associated with democratic values and a certain set of guiding precepts to the audience, to industry, and to the world of design professionals¹⁹⁶ was well developed and implemented by MOMA.

¹⁹⁴ Gingerich 337.

¹⁹⁵ According to Carpenter and Caplan, there is an American oral history that refers to the encounter between the Eames and the manufacturer Herman Miller. Herman Miller himself declared that the Eames’s LCM did not have a place in the showroom of his company. See Edward K. Carpenter, ed., “Introduction: A Tribute to Charles Eames,” *Industrial Design 25th Annual Design Review* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1979)18; Caplan 44.

¹⁹⁶ For more details on the “professional education for industrial design” and the American schools that offered design courses during 1950s, according to the information offered by the American Society of Industrial Designers (founded in 1944), see Pulos, “Seeking Consensus,” *The American Design Adventure, 1940-1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) 172-180. For example, one of the most important institutions was the Chicago Bauhaus (1937-1949) directed by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy; after 1949 it was

A related initiative undertaken by the Museum of Modern Art in 1950 addressed the publication of *Prize Designs for Modern Furniture*, the catalogue of the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design show organized by MOMA in 1948 with the support of Johnson-Carper Furniture Co., Knoll Associates, and Henry Miller Furniture Company. Charles Eames had already collaborated successfully with the furniture manufacturer Henry Miller when, in 1948, he took part in the competition organized by MOMA. The declaration of the 1948 competition defined the features of the concept of democratic design as follows:

To serve *the needs of the vast majority of people* we must have furniture that is adaptable to small apartments and houses, furniture that is *well-designed yet moderate in price*, that is comfortable but not bulky, and that can be easily moved, stored and cared for; in other words, *mass-produced furniture* that is planned and executed to fit *the needs of modern living*, production and merchandising [emphasis added].¹⁹⁷

The aim of the competition was to raise awareness of American families of the importance of modern furnishings for a new way of life. After largely promoting theoretical features of modern design, MOMA exemplified it practically by stressing several attributes of modern furniture: mass fabrication, moderate prices, quality of design, and broad reception. The human need-centred approach to design was an important aim for this competition. The novelty brought by the competition, which

absorbed by the Illinois Institute of Technology under Mies van der Rohe. See Paul Betts, "New Bauhaus and School of Design, Chicago," *Bauhaus*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Köln: Könemann, 2006) 66-73.

¹⁹⁷ The international design contest had three sections -- design for seating, design for storage pieces and design for upholstered two-purpose living-bedroom units; among the invited jury members was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the former Berlin Bauhaus director. See Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., *Prize Designs for Modern Furniture from the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1950) 6.

produced the first prize-winning projects, was its close connection with the aforementioned group of American retailers and manufacturers: Knoll Associates and Herman Miller Furniture Company. A very special feature of the contest was the introduction of the idea of “design research teams;” designers and “technological laboratories” staff were encouraged and financed in order to explore together new techniques that “resulted in low-cost products in many fields of everyday use but which had not yet applied to furniture manufacturing.”¹⁹⁸ The competition supported the idea of decreasing the cost of furniture with the help of mass production and new technology. As such, design creativity interwoven with industrial practicality would lead to new domestic design products imbued with American values.

The Eames team did not win first prize for the section devoted to seating units.¹⁹⁹ The Eames office did, however, win second prize in this international contest. Their project, developed in cooperation with engineers from the University of California, Los Angeles, proposed several versions of chairs. Even though, during this period, the Eames were most interested in experiments with glass-reinforced plastics, they submitted a series of chairs designed in sheet metal stamps due to the technological difficulties related to plastic. Charles Eames said,

We were interested in a plastic chair, but the technology at the time made that seem very difficult. We ... finally chose sheet metal because of the highly advanced mass production techniques available for it ... we built a drop hammer right in our shop.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Kaufmann, “Prize Designs...” 10.

¹⁹⁹ Co-winners of the first prize for seating units were Don R. Korr, a young graduate from Cranbrook Academy, and Professor Georg Leowald of Berlin-Frohnau. Kaufmann, “Prize Designs...” 12.

²⁰⁰ Caplan 56-7.

Two years later, however, the Herman Miller company managed to distribute and, later, to mass produce the plastic chairs in collaboration with the Zenith Plastics company (Figure 5). This armchair was one of the first one-piece fibre-glass plastic chairs which showed the material honestly. It was available in a variety of colours and with different choices of possible bases (for example, rocker-base, “H” base, “Eiffel Tower” base and so forth.)

The Eames’s understanding of democratic design appears on the 1948 competition panel (Figure 6); under the title “Low Cost Furniture, Quality Controlled, Mass Produceable,” they wrote:

The form of these chairs is not new nor is the philosophy of seating embodied in them, but they have been designed to be produced by existing *mass production methods* at *prices that make mass production feasible* and in a manner that makes *a consistent high quality* possible [emphasis added].²⁰¹

As this statement shows, they believed that mass-produced design provided affordable prices. They also believed in the high quality of products as an essential component of ordinary objects made to serve and improve people’s life.

Charles and Ray Eames stayed true to their design ideas and philosophy of creation throughout their careers whether dealing with architecture, different forms of design (such as exhibition design, chairs, and coffee tables) and filmmaking. They succeeded in reaching a large audience and convincing the buyer-user to trust their products. This success was the result of team work among designer and producer and

²⁰¹ See the exhibition panel (Figure 6); 20 September 2007 <www.eamesoffice.com>; also, the Eames’s statement for the 1948 competition panel is reproduced in Kaufmann, “Prize Designs...” 21. The collaborators were: Don Albinson, Frances Bishop, James Connor, Robert Jakobsen, Charles Kratka, Frederick Usher, Jr., and members of the Engineering Dept. at UCLA.

engineers to satisfy the needs of the consumer. By mid-1950s, the Eames achieved great success and professional recognition.

The Eames: the Concept of "Social Need"

Charles and Ray Eames believed that design could solve problems and meet people's needs. Answering the questions put to him by Madame L. Amic in the 1972 film *Design Q & A*,²⁰² Charles Eames reinforced need as the main concern for designers:

"Q. To whom does design address itself: to the greatest number (the masses)? to the specialists or the enlightened amateur? to a privileged social class?
A. To the need."²⁰³

Need is seen as a common human denominator. Need makes the designer design for the people. In this way, addressing common human needs, design becomes democratic. Also, in a statement sent to Madame L. Amic, Charles wrote: "As society's needs become more and more apparent, both client and designer expand their own personal concerns to meet these needs."²⁰⁴ Towards the end of his life (1978), Charles Eames had the same vision about the importance of the concept of need for a designer. He stayed true to their design philosophy, as explained in 1941, at the beginning of Charles and Ray's career: "The first step of design is that of determining the need It is not simple"²⁰⁵

²⁰² The film was used to accompany the exhibition *What is Design?* (1972) at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. The Eames rooms showed work produced for Herman Miller Inc., IBM Corporation, and the governments of the USA and India. See Neuhart 345; 388.

²⁰³ Neuhart 15.

²⁰⁴ Neuhart 14.

²⁰⁵ Charles Eames, "Design Today," *California Arts & Architecture* Sept. (1941): 18.

The client described to the designer the need that a product should serve; then, the designer strove to find the best solution according to demands of mass production, quality control, low prices, and a large audience. The Eames designed for the American consumer -- the target of production. Charles and Ray Eames designed for the middle class who had the income and the opportunity to buy affordable daily goods.

The furniture manufacturer Herman Miller directed advertisements for the Eames products to the “typical,” white-male-dominated family of that time. An example is the advertising card promoting the 1954 Sofa Compact by the Eames (Figure 7). On the front of the card, a “typical” white wife is seated on the Eames’s sofa in a cosy domestic ambiance, suggesting the white male-based family target. On the back of the card, there is the Herman Miller Inc. explanatory marketing description with the reason for which one should buy this product: it “incorporates all the qualities which distinguish his chairs Ideal for homes, offices, reception areas; anywhere, where service, budget and pleasure are decisive considerations.”²⁰⁶ This sofa had a compact, portable structure made of steel legs and frame, and a folding foam high back.

Sometimes, Charles and Ray Eames designed for people’s needs as they were described by the manufacturer. Charles recalled their collaboration with Jimmy Eppinger, the chief contact between the Eames and the Herman Miller company: “Because of his ability to describe furniture needs to us, it never really was a matter of the company’s being obligated to make anything we happened to design -- although it looked that way.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ See the back side of the card (Figure 7); 20 September 2007 <www.eamesoffice.com>

²⁰⁷ Caplan 56.

Moreover, the Eames made short films to show people how their design was done, sharing the process with the audience. The idea of showing how to make design objects and to disseminate them to many people can be seen in the films by the Eames, demonstrating how they executed a chair or a sofa.²⁰⁸ The extensive ability of this medium to reach a broad audience assured the widespread, “democratic,” dissemination of this idea. During their careers, the Eames made many films that had a number of functions; the above mentioned short films, for example, were promotional films shown in the Herman Miller showrooms. Stressing the connection between industry, design and social needs, Charles and Ray Eames based their project on mass production and standardization for everyday utilitarian object manufacturing. The final aim was to assure a better living for the users. They believed in the social dimension of design.

The Eames: Quality and the Craft Dimension

Maintaining high quality and low price in manufacturing of design were principles extremely valued by the Eames, with quality felt to be most important of the two. After 1956, the Eames created high-quality pieces that were not however affordable.²⁰⁹ In choosing between cheapness and quality, they chose quality in order to serve best people’s needs. As well as in other respects, as Pat Kirkham has discussed,

²⁰⁸ For example, the advertising card promoting the 1954 Sofa Compact is made according to the frames from the in-house short film S-73 (Sofa Compact) from 1954, narrated by Charles Eames, to explain the design to the Herman Miller company sales employees and dealers. See Neuhart 192.

²⁰⁹ For example, in 1956, the Lounge Chair sold for USD 404 and the Ottoman was sold for USD 174. Yet, the market success was great. Kirkham, *Evolution* 60.

they resemble William Morris “who wrestled with issues related to producing good-quality, aesthetically pleasing furniture ...”²¹⁰

There is a connection, as will be seen shortly, between the Eames’s craftsmanship-like quality of their objects, their Cranbrook education, and their early experiments, as Kirkham has observed:

Their own work validated the pre-industrial, personal and the hand-made as well as the industrial, the uniform and the mass-produced. They stressed the importance of quality in manufacture, whether by hand or machine, and of joy in labour as well as the pleasure to be obtained by from objects.²¹¹

As such, three points in the Eames activity were important: quality of manufacturing, either by hand or with machines, joy of labour, and pleasure given by the designed objects. This latter point, in particular, as well as the need to produce affordable goods (not always achieved, as discussed), was present in the Eames’ theory from the beginning, as seen in the following quotation written by Charles in 1941:

Certainly the future cannot be considered hopeless as long as designers continue to honor the accomplishment of producing *a very inexpensive article* that can serve well and *bring pleasure* to a million of housewives (emphasis added).²¹²

The issue of quality was assumed and promoted by the producer as a unique feature specific to the Eames’ design. For example, a Herman Miller seating catalogue (Figure 8) started with the following sentence, linking the quality of design with a low price and the professional reputation of Charles Eames:

²¹⁰ Kirkham, *Evolution* 54.

²¹¹ Pat Kirkham, “Humanizing Modernism: The Crafts, ‘Functioning Decoration’ and the Eameses,” *Journal of Design History* 11.1 (1998): 28.

²¹² Charles Eames, *Design Today* 18.

The quality and performance and modest price inherent in these chairs is recognized internationally to the extent that they have become present day classics. ... Designed by Charles Eames for the Herman Miller Furniture Co.²¹³

The Eames' propensity for technical innovation and mass manufacture is related to their early education. It is important to note that Charles and Ray Eames had met at the Cranbrook Academy near Detroit (1940), a school that was influenced by the Bauhaus design school in its curriculum, and had classes on craft and machine production. The famous Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen²¹⁴ taught at Cranbrook.²¹⁵ As Donald Albrecht observes, the Eames were exposed to modern European design trends, despite the general belief that they were the pure product of Californian modernism.²¹⁶ At Cranbrook Academy, Charles and Ray encountered European modernist design and experienced handicrafts. They learned from Saarinen about functionalist theories in design and architecture, tempered with "more humanist ones that echoed those of [Saarinen's] friend

²¹³ See the front page of the catalogue; 22 September 2007 <www.eamesoffice.com>

²¹⁴ Before coming into the US in 1923, Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950) worked in the spirit of Finnish Arts and Crafts Movement; for example, he designed handmade furnishings to decorate the interior of the Finnish Pavilion for the Universal Fair (Paris, 1900). See Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, "Scandinavia: 'Beauty for All'," *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004) 212-17.

²¹⁵ The Cranbrook Academy, an important American institution offering design instruction in the 1930s, was founded in 1925 by George G. Booth, a supporter of the Arts and Crafts Movement; he became the chief patron of the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen who came to the US in 1923. See Robert Judson Clark, "Cranbrook and the Search for Twentieth-Century Form," *Design in America: the Cranbrook Vision, 1925-1950*, eds. Robert Judson Clark, et al. (New York: Abrams, in association with the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983) 21-33.

²¹⁶ Donald Albrecht, *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention* (New York: Harry N. Abraham, 1997).

and countryman Alvar Aalto.”²¹⁷ This refers to the famous Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto²¹⁸ who advocated for using natural materials and organic forms in making modern design. Interestingly and important in relation to future furniture produced by the Eames, Alvar Aalto experimented with laminated bent-plywood furniture in the early 1930s.²¹⁹ Moreover, Alvar Aalto, “master of molded plywood, had spoken at Cranbrook in the late 30s and so the whole community was aware of the material and his work.”²²⁰

While at the Cranbrook Academy, Charles and Ray Eames became friends with the architect Eero Saarinen, the son of Eliel Saarinen, with whom they began a long-time professional partnership. They started to experiment with molded-plywood furniture, which they proposed for the 1940 MOMA competition. As Pat Kirkham noted, “Eero and Charles almost certainly knew of the experiments with molded-plywood furniture in Europe, particularly Germany and the Netherlands, of the late 1920s and 1930s.”²²¹ The probable relationship to Finnish design in this respect, however, is not clearly recognized.

At the end of his life, Charles explained, again in an interview, what the notion of quality meant to him. In 1977, Charles was asked whether he saw himself as an architect

²¹⁷ Kirkham, *Evolution* 45.

²¹⁸ It is important to note that Alvar Alto and his wife, Aino, represent a famous Scandinavian design couple who influenced modern design from the 1930s to the 1950s. Interestingly, the work of Aino Aalto, “like the American designer Ray Eames, has tended to be overshadowed by the work of her husband” Woodham 2.

²¹⁹ Interestingly, MOMA organized the exhibition Aaltos’ Furniture (1938), presenting “the Finnish couple’s work” and “a new yet reminiscently friendly material, bent birch plywood, and freely curved forms suited to human physique.” See Kaufmann, “The Department of Industrial Design” 5.

²²⁰ Demetrios Eames, *An Eames Primer* (New York: Universe Pub., 2001) 90.

²²¹ Kirkham, *Evolution* 46.

or a designer. He answered that he saw himself as a “tradesman,” stating that is important that both client and designers work in their own interests.

If your work is good enough, it can be art, but art isn’t a product. It’s a quality. Sometimes that’s lost sight of. Quality can be in anything.²²²

The quality of their design had another aspect. The Eames practice of design played out in the postwar context, which determined a “democratized modern architecture and design,” as Donald Albrecht has noted in talking about a postwar approach as a social agent of change.²²³ Charles and Ray Eames were part of this tendency. But, as Pat Kirkham has noted and as has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, some of their late pieces of furniture were expensive and destined for corporate offices. Relating the notion of need to problem-solving, Kirkham explains this as follows: “this was not a cynical move influenced by market trends; the Eames were too idealistic ...; the problem-solving process was what interested them most.”²²⁴

Private Manufacturing and Public Commissions

During their lifetime, the Eames worked for private manufacturers, the American government, and multinational corporations such as IBM. They also worked for foreign clients such as the Indian government.²²⁵ They had different commissions and

²²² Gingerich 327.

²²³ Albrecht, “Design as a Method of Action,” *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention* (New York: Harry N. Abraham, 1997) 22.

²²⁴ See Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames* 371-72.

²²⁵ For more details about the prolific collaboration between the Eames and the Nehru government of India, followed by the foundation of the Institute of Design in Ahmedabad in 1961, see Neuhart 232-3. For more details on the Eames Report (1958) outlining a

commissioners but strove throughout their careers to create according to their vision of design as a tool to meet people's needs.

The Eames's best known pieces of furniture were all produced by one company -- the Herman Miller Furniture Company, known as the manufacturer of the designers Charles and Ray Eames. The entrepreneurial instinct of D. J. Du Pree, the executive manager of Herman Miller,²²⁶ led him to work with the Eames. Part of the Herman Miller Furniture Company sales success was a result of the affordability of prices, vast markets of middle-class buyers, and their method of self-assembling and shipping in flat boxes (for the Sofa Compact, 1954).²²⁷ This is similar to the methods made most familiar by IKEA that, in fact, only began using this marketing technique a few years later.²²⁸ A short film produced by the Eames about the Sofa Compact showed how it was produced, how it was packed in a flat carton, how it was stored in a compact space, and then set up by the consumer who benefited from the lack of assembly and low transportation costs. This raises another issue related to democratic design: the idea that you can do it yourself with your own hands (DIY). This is an idea that would be developed thoroughly by IKEA but

program for professional design training in India see Charles and Ray Eames, "The Eames Report April 1958," *Design Issues* 7.2 (1991): 63-75.

²²⁶ D. J. Du Pree, a small town religious man obsessed with quality, worked collaboratively with the Herman Miller designers Gilbert Rohde, George Nelson, Charles Eames and Alexander Girard. He preferred to work with designers to create for a new life, rather than reproduce old patterns of furniture. Caplan 6.

²²⁷ Caplan 6.

²²⁸ In 1956, IKEA introduced the principle of the self-assembling flat-pack; Woodham 209.

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that, importantly, was an Arts and Crafts principle long before this.²²⁹ In this case, the meaning of democratization refers to affordability of making. The manufacturer Herman Miller tried to keep prices as low as the manufacturing process permitted. At that time, low prices, compared to contemporary luxury prices for the Eames's higher end design pieces, were made known in the Herman Miller advertising catalogues so the average person could afford to buy, use the goods, and, therefore, better his or her life. The Eames experimented, sometimes for years, to obtain a perfect mould to mass-produce cheaply. As an example, in a 1951 list of Eames's furniture, we can see that the DCM product -- a dining chair with metal legs -- cost USD 18.50 (Figure 9).²³⁰

The importance of reaching the final user was crucial for the Eames. In 1959, they were asked by the United States Information Agency (USIA) to produce a film about America for the American National Exhibition in Moscow. They were asked to present the daily life of Americans.²³¹ As Hélène Lipstadt has argued, they "were not critical of the power structure of American society, nor of capitalism, and they did not draw Americans' attention to oppression." At the same time, however, they did not follow the

²²⁹ The American middle class of the nineteenth century, which had time to develop crafts as a domestic hobby, had "the best conditions for the 'do-it-yourself' aspect of the Arts and Crafts." Kaplan, "America: the Quest for Democratic Design" 248.

²³⁰ According to American design historians Amy Ogata and Pat Kirkham, this was a relatively affordable price for the 1950s middle-class consumer (not cheap but also not expensive).

²³¹ *Glimpses of the U.S.A* is a complex film produced by the Eames to present the typical work day and the usual weekend day in the life of ordinary American citizens. Still and moving images were taken from a variety of different sources (photo archives, individual photographers, friends and work colleagues of the Eames). See Beatriz Colomina, "Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture," *Grey Room* 2 (2001): 5-29.

propaganda politics deployed by the American institutions, even if the Eames worked for them.²³² Close to the end of his life, Charles explained, for example, how he and Ray managed to avoid the USIA control over the slide projections for the Moscow International Fair (1959), saying, “We had the very difficult problem of making the first statement from this country to the Soviet Union since the Russian Revolution.”²³³ Their relationship with the United States government for this project was somewhat uneasy. Charles discussed their challenge of putting materials at the Moscow Fair; however, they succeeded in avoiding the government ideological control in a very simple way:

Theoretically, it was a statement made by our State Department, and yet we did it entirely here and it was never seen by anyone from our government until they saw it in Moscow. It was a little touchy, but one of those things. If you ask for criticism, you get it. If you don’t, there is a chance everyone will be too busy to worry about it.²³⁴

They were able to convey their view of America, without taking an official position. The same may be said about their understanding of the middle-class target for their daily design. Their aim was to approach as many people as possible, in a democratic manner. However, they never elaborate upon precisely what they understood by the term “people.” Reaching the final receiver was the task of the manufacturer or the client. Serving the needs of people through design was more important for them.

²³² For a discussion of the class ideological implication of the multi-screen slide show made by the Eames for the American Exhibition at the Moscow Fair of 1959 see Hélène Lipstadt, “‘Natural Overlap’ Charles and Ray Eames and the Federal Government,” *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention*, ed. Donald Albrecht (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997) 172.

²³³ Gingerich 332.

²³⁴ Gingerich 333.

Conclusion

In the American consumption-oriented market from the 1940s to the late 1960s, there were different ways of making design, and planned obsolescence was one of them. The Eames were unique because they chose a “democratic approach” to design that was concerned with making mass-produced goods without harming quality, focusing on solving design problems addressed to human need. An important institution that changed the American people’s perception of “modern design” was the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Organizing exhibitions on useful and low-priced objects and furniture design competitions in collaboration with private manufacturers, the directors of Department of Industrial Design at MOMA raised the awareness of the relationship between industrial design and practical life. MOMA advocated for useful, good quality, affordable goods in association with the American democratic life, setting forth “precepts” of modern design. The notion of “use” was more important than sales. In this way, design and the architecture-trained directors of the industrial design department at MOMA (that is, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.) were able to successfully change people’s attitudes on modern design.

Charles and Ray Eames became known through the MOMA’s competitions and exhibitions. The idea of design competitions with manufacturers producing the winning prizes was crucial. The Eames competed and won important prizes. On the private market, designers and manufacturers met. Charles and Ray Eames, as a design team, created every-day goods for ordinary people, goods that were of high quality, inexpensive, and mass-produced. Experimenting with materials (plywood, fibreglass, reinforced plastic) and technological innovations (welding metal to wood) was a

continuous preoccupation for the Eames in order to achieve high quality and low cost. Achieving high quality in their designs, whether craft-based or machine-based, was essential to their work. Their Cranbrook education, based on Arts and Crafts values taught by the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, was crucial for Charles and Ray Eames. However, two periods appeared in their design career: the beginning was dedicated to low-cost domestic objects, but after the 1960s they concentrated more on quality and information design; so their products became increasingly expensive, catering to a different group (for example, corporations), and were, therefore, non-democratic. As such, in the second phase of their career, their practical approach to design was no longer democratic, similar, in respect, to William Morris who theoretically advocated for “democratic design” but who did not, in reality, make it.

Chapter 4: Design in East Germany, Soviet Policy, and the Hellerau Furniture: A Case Study of Communist Democratic Design

This chapter addresses the notion of democratic design within the German Democratic Republic, the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (the DDR).²³⁵ At the end of Second World War and following the 1945 Yalta Agreement, the new socialist state of East Germany, under Soviet occupation and political influence, started to disseminate communist ideology in each sector of life. The manner in which citizens were to live their domestic life was molded, supervised, and controlled by the state. This control extended to industry and mass-produced design. Soviet principles that were applied to design, it will be shown, came up against existing German design, especially that of the modernist Bauhaus movement. Amidst the countries of the Eastern bloc, the DDR, in particular, had a specific existing design tradition that would encounter the influence of the communist system. The DDR, with its state controlled economy, then, intervened through its party apparatus at all levels of society, including in the creation and production of design and its understanding. This chapter considers the role of the communist state apparatus in respect to design and the significance of the concept of democratic design in a communist context. The situation of design professionals vis-à-vis the ideology of the communist political system is investigated.

²³⁵ The German Democratic Republic was founded in 1949 under the autocratic supervision of Soviet representatives. Joseph Stalin saluted its “existence” as a new “peace-loving democratic Germany” within the Western European imperialistic world. For further information on the complicated East German history under Stalinist rule see Klaus Schroeder, “Die Gründung der DDR 1949,” *Der SED - Staat: Partei, Staat und Gesellschaft 1949-1990* (München: Hanser, 1998) 71-82; Gareth Pritchard, *The Making of the GDR, 1945-53: From Antifascism to Stalinism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

Soviet Influence on DDR Economy

The German Democratic Republic had a close relationship with the Soviet Union, which shaped the East German political and economic structures. The country was ruled by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED),²³⁶ the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. As a consequence of the dependence of East Germany on the USSR economy,²³⁷ its industrial development and design developed specific features. The DDR was also influenced by the politics of the Soviet system. This included two major phases: a period of dictatorship under the rule of Stalin (1922-1953) and, of particular importance to the present study, another period of de-Stalinization, known as the “thaw”, after Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s new rule (1953-1964).²³⁸ In East Germany, the latter situation corresponded to the epoch of Walter Ulbricht, the SED secretary general (1950-1971), who played a major role in building the Berlin Wall in 1961 and who attempted to create a more efficient East German economy, a new technological revolution, through

²³⁶ More details about its foundation may be found in Schroeder 33-40.

²³⁷ Moreover, article 6 of the DDR Constitution stated that “The German Democratic Republic is forever and irrevocably allied with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.” *What is Life in the GDR?* 52.

²³⁸ In the Soviet Union, the Twentieth Party Congress, in 1955, marked a period of re-orientation towards the pure Marxist roots of socialism after Stalin’s socialist autocratic control; it marked the start of the second cultural revolution and implied a re-orientation towards the field of domestic life (this is the Russian term *byt*), and design. In a Russian newspaper of that time, it was explained that “Design teaches us to live democratically and rationally.” See Victor Buchli, “Khrushchev, Modernism, and the Fight against *Petit-bourgeois* Consciousness in the Soviet Home,” *Journal of Design History* 10.2 (1997): 162. This period in the Russian socialist history corresponds to the mass housing national project initiated by Khrushchev, which was promoted in all countries in the Eastern bloc.

the New Economic System (*Neues Ökonomisches System* or NÖS) introduced in 1963.²³⁹

Walter Ulbricht's new rule was important because it emphasized the idea of economic reform centred on industrial performance and standardization.

The DDR economic system, based on the abolition of private property and the collective public ownership of the means of production, was shaped according to the Soviet-planned state-run policy. The importance of planning was seen in the set-up of the Five-Year Plan or the Seven-Year Plan. As explained in Chapter Two, such planning was seen as the most important instrument to advance the allegedly prosperous economy:

In the GDR, as in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, the plan serves the people and their needs are the decisive yardstick for working out any plan. It serves to implement our policy, i.e. the further improvement of people's living and cultural standards through a high rate of development of socialist production²⁴⁰

Therefore the plan, including industrial production of daily goods, helped the economy to fulfill people's needs. The continuous reminder of the USSR 's influence was used by the SED Central Committee to justify ideologically how the system played out in favour of the East German working class (*die Arbeitersklasse*). The SED explained the rationality and legitimacy of central planning, using rhetoric surrounding the notion of "democracy" to do so: "And how is a plan drawn up? In a word: democratically. ... Overall planning of society is a characteristic feature and inherent advantage of socialism."²⁴¹ The quantity of goods that all communist citizens should receive were, in theory, estimated and agreed

²³⁹ For further details on the economic and military relations between the Soviet Union and East Germany see Angela E. Stent, "Soviet Policy toward the German Democratic Republic," *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sarah Meiklejohn Terry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 33-60.

²⁴⁰ *What is Life in the GDR?* 45.

²⁴¹ *What is Life in the GDR?* 46.

upon by “all people,” in what was termed an egalitarian manner. The people, in this case, were represented by the State Planning Commission. Also, the idea that “All staple foods, everyday commodities ... service charges and tariffs are low and stable in the GDR”²⁴² was stated in the state-published book *What is Life in the GDR?* (1971), emphasizing the idea of state-guaranteed price stability. Goods were produced to meet the working-class needs. They were produced according to the centralized state-controlled plan that was conceived “democratically,” and that stipulated stable low prices. In theory, the state assured material security for all its members through this economic socialist planning.

Closely related to industrial production and to state planning was the field of industrial design, which, as the communist state claimed, helped to improve people’s living standards according to the socialist way of life. There were four important design education institutions and centres in East Germany: the Institute for Industrial Design in Berlin-Weißensee (begun in 1950), the Institute for Interior Design in Weimar (begun in 1951), the School for Industrial Design in Halle-Burg Giebichenstein (begun in 1958), and the College of Arts and Crafts in Dresden (begun in 1948) (Appendix 1). Designers trained in these bodies were employed by state factories and institutions, as will be shown, and their achievements by the end of the 1960s were reported in the only East German industrial design magazine *form+zweck* (*Form and Function*),²⁴³ a publication that also functioned as a platform for theoretical discussions on design. In this

²⁴² *What is Life in the GDR?* 24.

²⁴³ Published in East Germany for the first time in 1957 as a yearbook, the publication *form+zweck* was founded by the Institute for Industrial Design in East Berlin and functioned as a regular journal from 1964 to 1989. After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), this design magazine continued to be published irregularly <<http://www.formundzweck.de/>>.

consideration of East German democratic design, special attention will be paid to the furniture design made in Hellerau, near Dresden, an example of a design situation in which the Bauhaus “legacy” plays a complex role.

It is important to note the situation of the communist female designer within East Germany. Under the DDR working system, there were female designers as well as female workers because the SED claimed theoretically that there was no gender discrimination, as shown in Chapter Two (the claims were made, especially in comparison to the West where women were seen to have been exploited). Most of the female designers, however, worked in the field of small domestic products such as glassware and textiles.²⁴⁴

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Design

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany endorsed a monolithic vision of design, closely connected to industry, as a main factor in building the communist “multi-developed society”; this vision manifested itself within the context of the socialist economic system, Russian politics, and the Bauhaus design legacy. The East German approach to design focused on the idea of improving people’s lives and helping to develop the socialist society (*der sozialistischen Gesellschaft*). In this approach, the

²⁴⁴ Little research has been done on DDR women and design. As discussed, most female designers worked in certain areas. This is consistent with the tradition of associating women with delicate home tasks; this evokes the Bauhaus tendency of guiding the female student to the weaving studio, bookbinding, and pottery. Also, women worked in fashion design which was itself a problematic expression because it was ideologically associated with the capitalist world; for more about the proletarian clothing and the role of women see Judd Stitzel, “On the Seam between Socialism and Capitalism: East German Fashion Shows,” *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. David F. Crew (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003) 51-85.

aesthetics of design were held to be as important as industrial productivity within the ideology of the Cold War. This is the reason for which legitimate rights to the Bauhaus legacy were disputed by the socialist East Germany and the American-influenced capitalist West Germany. The Bauhaus legacy became a site of ideological debate in terms of democracy and economic supremacy.

In the DDR, design was considered to be part of a standard domestic daily life, functioning in relation to people's basic needs. Design served to help people develop a "socialist personality," wrote the designer Martin Kelm, expressing an idea that will be returned to shortly. "Any progress achieved in raising labour productivity leads to improvements in people's living standards and the quality of their life."²⁴⁵ The designer Martin Kelm, student of former Bauhaus member Mart Stam and unofficial leader of the design field in East Germany, explained the vision of integrating design and economy: "we must see engineering, production, economy, and design as a unit. This forms the basis of a scientific concept of the design."²⁴⁶ Product design (*die Produktgestaltung* or *die Erzeugnisgestaltung*) was recognized as being extremely important for DDR life and culture. Kelm wrote his seminal book *Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus* (*Product Design in Socialism*, 1971) to show the significance of product design for socialist society. He noted:

The sophisticated design of the material environment of the people in socialist society, the design of work and living environments, means of transportation, investment and consumer goods, is the great task of the cultural politics.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ *What is life like in the GDR?* 42.

²⁴⁶ Martin Kelm, "Humanisierung unserer Umwelt," *Bildende Kunst* 14 (1966): 451.

²⁴⁷ This book was published in 1971 as Kelm's revised dissertation *Die Bedeutung der Gestaltung industrieller Erzeugnisse im entwickelten gesellschaftlichen System des*

In this, Kelm shared the SED policy, being a party member. According to Walter Ulbrich, the SED secretary general, design was “an essential element of the socialist cultural revolution.”²⁴⁸ In conformity with it, design was strongly related to economy and life. Therefore, the quality of product design was felt to be important in serving to develop socialist society. “Design is a component of the living environment and an expression of life at the same time. Design stems from the use of things,”²⁴⁹ explained Kelm, acknowledging the human need-centred dimension of design. “The fight for the development of high quality products,”²⁵⁰ was considered crucial for the socialist state. The notion of socialist progress was related by the SED to socialist ideology, and all design terminology and theoretical writings were imbued with this ideology. The system strove to improve and equalize the life of the communist citizens who should, it was believed, develop a new “socialist personality”. The idea of making use of “socialist commodities” was considered important in molding the citizens in the DDR. According to Martin Kelm, “Consumption in socialism is not simply a matter of needing something

Sozialismus (The Meaning of the Design of Industrial Products in the Developed Social System of Socialism), under the aegis of the *Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED* (the Social Sciences Institute at the Central Committee of the SED) in Berlin which was also the institution where Kelm defended his dissertation in 1969. See Martin Kelm, *Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus -- Product Design in Socialism* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1971) 23.

²⁴⁸ See Paul Betts, “The Politics of Post-Fascist Aesthetics -1950s West and East German Industrial Design,” *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 309.

²⁴⁹ Kelm, “Humanisierung unserer Umwelt” 452.

²⁵⁰ Kelm, “Humanisierung unserer Umwelt” 452.

and getting it, but rather a process by which the socialist personality is created.”²⁵¹ The notion of “socialist personality” is a construct, somewhat ambiguous, that was used to help define the working class.

The ownership of the means of production in the DDR “belonged” collectively to all communist citizens, who were also the consumers. As a consequence, the industrial output was destined to be accessed by the owner-producers. The “democratic” rule, according to SED, within the communist society was to be exercised by the people in an egalitarian manner, and the goods, in terms of accessibility, were, theoretically, available to all: “what has been produced is distributed equitably.”²⁵² This was according to SED policy, which highlighted that the consumption of wares should be done collectively, in a manner similar to the idea of a “democratic” leadership. Equality of living standards for all communist citizens, according to state policy, was said to be guaranteed. As shown in Chapter Two, the DDR political apparatus claimed that the socialist democracy was defined by the participation of the working class in everything related to life, from political to social issues. The SED claimed that every citizen had a voice in the DDR.

Production and consumption, therefore, were shared collectively by the people. “Whatever they produce is entirely for the benefit of the whole working population”²⁵³ because “whatever is produced under socialism is directly or indirectly for the benefit of

²⁵¹ Quoted in Eli Rubin, “The Form of Socialism without Ornament,” *Journal of Design History* 19.2 (2006): 161. Rubin discusses this in the context of Kelm’s dissertation defense (1969) which is supported by Günther Mittag, the Secretary of Economics in the SED’s Central Committee and a powerful member of the Politburo.

²⁵² *What is life like in the GDR* 140.

²⁵³ *What is life like in the GDR?* 39.

the producer.”²⁵⁴ Regarding the needs of the working people and their real living necessities, the socialist party claimed to listen to the people and to take their needs into consideration when planning industrial production. The SED official strategy, however, did not correspondent with practical life. As Gert Selle has noted, there was a difference between theory and practice of socialist design in the DDR “which blindly proclaimed design as mass phenomenon and made not the slightest effort to consider the daily lives of the masses.”²⁵⁵

Design, as proclaimed by the SED, comprised several attributes: design was related to industrial production; design goods were produced by the working people for the people who democratically accessed them; design was mass-produced; and design was standardized, with low cost and high quality. The party’s official papers drafted at congresses and issued as resolutions, expressed the SED vision on socialist industry and design in close cooperation with the Soviet Union, which was intended to show off the superiority of the socialist economy against that of a capitalist system. For the most people, the design professionals who accepted public functions within the political system emphasized these socialist design principles.

²⁵⁴ *What is life like in the GDR?* 41.

²⁵⁵ Gert Selle is an East German design historian who re-evaluated the idea of *Ostalgie*, that is, nostalgia for life in East Germany, coming from the German words *Ost* (East) and *Nostalgie* (nostalgia). See Gert Selle, “The Lost Innocence of Poverty: On the Disappearance of a Culture Difference,” *Design Issues* 8.2 (1992): 61-73.

The Bauhaus "Legacy"

In comparison to other Soviet satellite countries from the Eastern bloc, East Germany had a strong tradition in design connected to industry and society; this was a special quality deriving from the foundation that had been laid by prewar institutions such as the *Deutsche Werkbund* (1907-1934) and the Bauhaus (1919-1933) which became crucial for a new understanding of modern design in the periods preceding and following the Second World War. Therefore, Russian authority, omnipresent in all levels of East German structure, including its industry, daily life and mass production, encountered a strong local German design tradition.

This special situation that brought together Soviet communist rhetoric and Bauhaus theories of modern design²⁵⁶ was translated into in an uneasy relationship of acceptance, then rejection, and, then, rehabilitation. In East Germany, this association between socialist design and the complexity of the Bauhaus was problematic, especially because, in some cases, there were Bauhaus members who shared convictions with those of the communist states, and the DDR itself allowed ex-Bauhaus designers, such as Mart Stam or Marianne Brandt, to work in the communist state. As Paul Betts has noted "The

²⁵⁶ Bauhaus ideas of modern design were diverse, according to the shift of its directors and instructors. Walter Gropius's founding manifesto from 1919 emphasized the connection with crafts and the idea of unifications of all arts in order to achieve the complete building. In 1923, Gropius called clearly for "art and technology in a new unity," advocating for the principle of mass production, simplicity, and standard types of commodities as a social necessity. In 1928, Hannes Meyer, the second director of the Berlin Bauhaus, generated conflict, supporting Communist ideology. He was oriented towards utilitarian architecture, functionalism, and researching the user's needs. After his dismissal in 1930, he went to Russia. Mies van der Rohe became the last director of the Bauhaus in 1930, advocating for a rational implementation of space. After the Bauhaus was closed by the Nazis in 1933, he fled to London and then moved to Chicago. See Jeannine Fiedler, ed., *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 2006).

reception of the Bauhaus in the former German Democratic Republic was always ideologically charged.”²⁵⁷ The official German communist party had different perspectives on the Bauhaus within the Cold War period. This was a period when important personalities of the Bauhaus, such as Mies van der Rohe and Max Bill, tried to carry on the school’s name, founding new Bauhaus institutions of design in America and West Germany.²⁵⁸

Two major periods were important for the DDR in respect to Bauhaus design and its aesthetics: a period between 1950 and 1964, when the Bauhaus “legacy” was associated with “formalism” and capitalism, and the post-1964 period, when the Bauhaus was officially rehabilitated. Before 1964, the socialist state rejected the non-ornamented Bauhaus line and promoted only SED design policy as a socialist alternative to Western modern design. The so-called “formalist debate” or “formalist discussion” (*der Formalismusdiskussion*) was strictly related to ornament. According to Kurt Liebke, president of the *Deutschen Bauakademie* (the East German Architectural Association, the DBA) formalism in design and architecture, which resembled Bauhaus design and architecture, was seen as anti-socialist culture and a tool of American imperialism.

²⁵⁷ See Paul Betts, “The Bauhaus in the German Democratic Republic: Between Formalism and Pragmatism,” *Bauhaus*, Jeannine Fiedler, ed. (Köln: Könemann, 2006) 42.

²⁵⁸ The New Bauhaus School of Design was founded Laszlo Moholy Nagy in 1937 in Chicago. Closed in 1938, it was reopened in 1939 under the name of the Chicago School of Design and was incorporated in 1949 with the Illinois Institute of Technology. In 1933, Josef and Anni Albers set up a Bauhaus-related program at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In West Germany, the *Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm* (HfG, 1951-1968) was founded by Max Bill.

Liebknecht advocated for a return to traditional German styles such as Baroque, Rococo, and Biedermeier, appealing to the German nationalist feelings.²⁵⁹

The 1950 SED Party Assembly, for example, while launching a crusade against Bauhaus “imperialistic” formalism, stipulated that socialist design should be “national in form, socialist in content (*sozialistisch im Inhalt, national in der Form*).”²⁶⁰ The SED third congress of 1951 proclaimed the socialist state policy against “formalism”, which was associated with non-ornamentation, and rejuvenated the ornamental nineteenth-century German style.²⁶¹ The SED publicly denounced the functional side of modernist design and architecture; in 1951, Walter Ulbricht called “the Bauhaus style” a “manifestation hostile to the people”²⁶²; the SED also criticized and rejected the ornament-less aesthetics, seeing it as a postwar Western modernist phenomenon.

However, by 1964, the Bauhaus vision would be slowly rehabilitated within the East German socio-political system due in large part to economic reasons: a housing

²⁵⁹ See Heinz Hirdina, *Gestalten für die Serie: Design in der DDR 1949-1985* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1988) 46. Moreover, Walter Heisig, director of the *Staatlicher Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten* (National Commission for Artistic Affairs) articulated this idea about formalism: “Cutlery without ornament is formalism (*Ein Besteck ohne Ornament ist Formalismus*),” Hirdina 40.

²⁶⁰ See Hirdina 45; Eli Rubin, “The Form of Socialism without Ornament,” *Journal of Design History* 19.2 (2006): 157.

²⁶¹ The 1951 congress was entitled *Kampf gegen den Formalismus in Kunst und Literatur, für eine fortschrittliche deutsche Kultur* (Campaign against Formalism in Art and Literature in the Name of a Progressive German Culture) and the SED also denounced functionalist architecture. See Betts, “Bauhaus in the German Democratic Republic” 45; Hirdina 44.

²⁶² Betts, “The Bauhaus in the German Democratic Republic” 45.

crisis and material shortages in Eastern Europe.²⁶³ The DDR economy gained impetus due to a Russian demand rooted in Khrushchev's new economic policy from 1954: to build better, more cheaply, and faster because of the housing crisis within Eastern Europe (*Besser, billiger und schneller bauen*). That meant mass production and standardization of furniture types appropriated for the new communist blocks of flats. Modern design was more economically to produce due to more functionalist aesthetic. In spite of the previous denunciations, the principles of modern design were assimilated and applied in production. These principles included mass fabrication, quality, and standardization.

The Bauhaus design school located successively in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin -- cities that were part of the DDR after the Second World War -- had a great impact upon the design philosophy of East Germany. Interestingly, the destiny of the Bauhaus school of design was sealed by the Nazi dictatorship. The Nazi regime blamed the Bauhaus directors and its members for supporting "Jewish and Bolshevik culture"²⁶⁴ and "cultural degeneration." In East Germany, as discussed, the Bauhaus phenomenon was perceived variously as an "educational center animated by the spirit of democracy and socialism"²⁶⁵ or as a weapon of Western imperialism.

Design and the German design tradition of the Bauhaus became victims of the Cold War ideological fight between the American democracy and the communist one. As

²⁶³ The DDR communist economic system experienced a crisis: it was suggested that the export opportunities offered by West Germany were important for the SED, and the DDR accepted the "formalist" aspect. Bertsch 22.

²⁶⁴ This is according to a recollection of Selman Selmanagić, a DDR ex-Bauhaus designer. See Sonja Wüsten, et al. *Selman Selmanagić: Festgabe zum 80. Geburtstag am 25. April 1985* (Berlin: Kunsthochschule Berlin, 1985) 19.

²⁶⁵ This is a quote from an article published in 1947 in the East German cultural magazine *Forum*: quoted in Betts, "Bauhaus in the German Democratic Republic" 43-4.

such, the Bauhaus “legacy” was fought over by capitalist West Germany, supported financially by the American government through the Marshall Plan, and socialist East Germany, guided politically and economically by the Soviet Union.

The West German *Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm* (HfG, 1951-1968), run by the Swiss architect and designer Max Bill, was seen by East Germans to be in competition with the Eastern *Hochschule für industrielle Formgestaltung Halle-Burg Giebichenstein* (HiF) and to be founded in relation to capitalist industry and with the help of Americans.²⁶⁶ In 1952, the American High Commissioner John McCloy presented a check to the HfG and made clear the new significance of the Ulm School: “This school is intended to teach methods for the advancement of democratic life in Germany.”²⁶⁷ He referred to Western German design as part of a capitalist democracy that was financially endorsed by the American government. In the same context, the DDR return of the ex-Bauhaus Dutch architect and designer Mart Stam was seen as the “true” Bauhaus revival in East Germany, in opposition to Western German design.

Located in Berlin, Halle, Dresden, and Weimar, the most important design institutions in East Germany were run by designers who developed their projects within the ideology of the communist state. The strong affiliation -- consisting sometimes of rejection and sometimes of acceptance -- of East German design with the Bauhaus school

²⁶⁶ See Michael Suckow, “HfG- HiF,” *75 Jahre Burg Giebichenstein, 1915-1990: Beiträge zur Geschichte*, Renate Luckner-Bien, ed. (Halle: Burg Giebichenstein, Hochschule für Kunst und Design Halle, 1990) 222-28.

²⁶⁷ More details and quotation in Brigitte Hausmann “Experiment 53/68,” *Ulmer Modelle, Modelle nach Ulm: Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm 1953-1968 = Ulm School of Design 1953-1968*, Hatje Cantz ed. (New York: D.A.P., 2003) 16.

and its principles attracted, in some cases, ex-Bauhaus members who came to work in East Germany. Immediately after Second World War, several former Bauhaus teachers and students returned to the socialist East Germany in order to continue the ideals of the Bauhaus -- including the aforementioned Mart Stam, Wilhelm Wagenfeld, Marianne Brandt, and Michael Horst.²⁶⁸ The most influential for the unfolding of East German design was Mart Stam,²⁶⁹ who was appointed head of the Berlin Institute of Industrial Design in 1950. Earlier, in 1948, Stam had given a speech stating the position of design within the communist system:

raising cultural standards and the artistic and qualitative standards of everyday consumer items will positively influence people's perception. Only in this way will we achieve a culturally-oriented education which raises the consciousness and aesthetic appreciation of the broad mass of working population, the workers and peasants.²⁷⁰

In order to educate and elevate the people, design -- as a component of socialist cultural learning within the communist state -- had to address the quality of daily life for the

²⁶⁸ For their professional biographies see Heinz Hirdina, *Gestalten für die Serie: Design in Der DDR 1949-1985* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1988) 369-380. Interestingly, Mart Stam's biography was included in this exhaustive book on socialist East German design even though he had worked in the DDR for only a short time, four years. This was perhaps intended to reinforce the significance of his design philosophy and his influence in the field of communist German design. Furthermore, Hirdina's first chapter on DDR design in the 1950s starts with a paragraph dedicated to Mart Stam, serial production, and the needs of the masses.

²⁶⁹ Stam was an important functionalist Dutch architect who was interested in socialist experiments; he collaborated with the *Deutsche Werkbund*, lectured at the Bauhaus, co-founded the International Congress of Modernist Architects (CIAM), worked in Russia for a period, and lived in the German Democratic Republic from 1948 to 1952. For an overview of Mart Stam's architectural and design work see C. v. Amerongen, et al, eds., *Mart Stam: Documentation of His Work 1920-1965* (London, Royal Institute of British Architects, 1970); for details on the work of Stam in the socialist Eastern Germany see Simone Hain, "Mart Stam in der DDR," *form+zweck* 2+3 (1991) 10 January 2008 <<http://www.formundzweck.de>>.

²⁷⁰ Hirdina 16; quoted in Bertsch 18.

working class. Stam also advocated clearly for the principle of mass production in relation to the notion of quality: "Today we need a better -- better devised -- product, which -- tried and tested -- can be mass produced."²⁷¹ And this product, appropriated for the socialist new era, was intended to have an industrial form destined for a new individual. According to Mart Stam, design was part of the cultural education through which the masses of the workers would benefit, in this way improving socialist society as a whole. His communist beliefs coincided with those of the ruling socialist party, which wanted to implement a socialist cultural revolution. Design was important to reinforce the socialist revolution using certain principles and ideas to be promoted as communist design. This ideologically charged approach to socialist design was part of a broader communist design phenomenon manifested in the Russian-influenced socialist democracies from Eastern Europe. Design in East Germany was an ideologically charged notion that followed the line of the communist party politics and developed gradually.

There were, however, designers with communist-oriented affinities who did not totally go along with the authoritative rule of the SED. This was the case of the former Bauhaus Mart Stam, who decided to leave East Germany in 1953 for political reasons. But he had trained local students such as Martin Kelm, Günter Reißmann, and Albert Krause²⁷² whom he educated in the spirit of the Bauhaus functionalism, teaching them about serial production, needs of the masses, and industrial design.²⁷³ This community of designers educated by Mart Stam in Berlin became crucial to East German industrial

²⁷¹ Bertsch 18.

²⁷² Rubin 156.

²⁷³ Hirdina 38.

design. After Stam left the DDR, his students moved from Berlin to Burg Giebichstein and founded the Institute for Design and Development, a small studio place where they experimented with plastics.²⁷⁴

In 1962 Martin Kelm joined the SED.²⁷⁵ In 1965 he had become one of the most influential industrial designers in East Germany; he was appointed the SED state secretary for product design (*Staatssekretär für Produktdesign*) and wrote his important dissertation *Produktdesign im Socialism* (1971) to explain and educate the masses on socialist design. This book had two functions: it was a theoretical tool of socialist design and it was a handbook on party ideology. Kelm's political engagement as a professional designer is subject to interpretation because, in that "democratic" system, any public function was conditioned by political engagement. Kelm became the official voice on design matters, and, as will be shown shortly, he had power in design decision making and in hiring his design colleagues within the industry. The Bauhaus reception in the communist DDR state and within East German designers educated in the Bauhaus spirit was not uniform. The "formalist discussion" showed a multiplicity of attitudes that finally reinforced the Bauhaus significance for East German design.

²⁷⁴ For an excellent and extensive discussion on the use of plastics in the DDR see Eli Rubin, "Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic: Toward an Economic, Consumer, Design, and Cultural History," diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004.

²⁷⁵ Rubin 318. Reißmann, Kelm's colleague, also joined the SED; in an interview from 2002 with Eli Rubin, Reißmann claimed that he joined the communist party as a "career move" and that he "was not any kind of ideological true believer."

Emphasis on Quality

The high quality of design products was seen as an extremely important attribute of mass-produced goods for daily use. The quality of socialist wares was considered to be the difference between communist and capitalist design, according to the SED and Kelm's writings. It is possible however that, in the case of Martin Kelm, the quality-centred design approach originated in his Bauhaus education gained from Stam.

In his seminal book *Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus* (1971), Kelm entitled his subheading *Die Produktgestaltung als Merkmal der Qualität (Product Design as Sign of Quality)*, citing the SED directives: "The demand for high-quality, consumer goods of good taste is growing and we are dealing with issues of quality and structural problems in order to supply the citizens with textiles, clothes, shoes and furniture."²⁷⁶ Socialist product quality, discussed in opposition to the capitalist notion of quality, was defined by Kelm as follows: "Quality is the totality of the properties of a product, the degree of its suitability for the intended use."²⁷⁷

Another important East German design theoretical writing, *Gestalten für die Serie: Design in Der DDR 1949-1985 (Mass-Produced Design: Design in the DDR 1949-1985)*, written as a socialist design retrospective in the DDR by the designer Heinz Hirdina, emphasized the importance of design quality and mass production in the 1960s. In a section entitled *Im Zentrum Qualität (The Centrality of Quality)*, Hirdina explained the importance of quality and design (*Qualität und Formgebung*) and industrial consumer goods (*der technischen Konsumgüter*) as reinforced by the SED conferences.

²⁷⁶ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 55.

²⁷⁷ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 57.

This high-quality, mass-produced socialist design was presented to the DDR citizens and to other European and Asian socialist countries (for example, the People's Republic of China) during the spring and autumn trade fairs held in Leipzig. These trade fairs were very important as they helped legitimate and reinforce the DDR as an economic leader because the tradition of the Leipzig fairs went back to the Middle Ages.²⁷⁸ It also helped the DDR regime show off to its own population the best products of socialist industry as well as helping the DDR to establish export contracts with Western countries.²⁷⁹ However, citizens noticed the discrepancy between the abundance of goods displayed at the 1950s Leipzig fairs and those available to meet their needs.

State-controlled Manufacturing

Due to the bureaucratic and hierarchical organization of economic activity, industry, design creation, and production were subordinated to the policies of official state-controlled bodies. The producers of design objects were state-owned and -controlled factories, called VEBs, *Volkseigener Betrieb* (People-Owned Factory).²⁸⁰ These factories operated according to Soviet market practices, without competition and with prices regulated by the party institutions.

²⁷⁸ For a significant discussion on the functions and complexities of the Leipzig Trade Fair see Katherine Pence, "'A World in Miniature': the Leipzig Trade Fairs in the 1950s and East German Consumer Citizenship," *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. David F. Crew (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2003) 21-50.

²⁷⁹ Rubin 234-5.

²⁸⁰ The VEBs replaced the SAGs, *Sowjetisch Aktiengesellschaft* (Soviet State-Owned Factories) where the decisions were made by workers and engineers. See Rubin 156 and Höhne n14, 272.

In the early years of the DDR, there were no professional designers working for the Soviet-driven industry; there were “engineers and workers” interested in solving the production problems.²⁸¹ The generation of the Bauhaus-educated designers returned to East Germany after the Second World War and they started working in industry. The first generation of designers educated in the DDR started to work at the end of the first Five-Year-Plan (1951-1955). The designers were state-employed in a state monopolistic non-competitive market and, therefore, design professionals were state-dependent in terms of decision-making for mass production. “Private associations, of whatever kind for the establishment of economic power are prohibited,”²⁸² stipulated the SED.

Designers were employed in design institutes or in the design departments belonging to the factories. In the case of the design institutes, there were two important institutions dedicated to design creation, research, and testing (Appendix 1) that, in time, became ideologically controlled by the SED due to a solid centralized hierarchy. The Central Institute for Design in Berlin (*Die Zentralinstitut für Formgestaltung*) was created under the direction of Martin Kelm in 1963, as part of the Ministry of Culture, as the first official state institution dedicated to industrial design, and which functioned as an advisory body. In 1965, the Central Institute for Design was placed under the control of *Das Deutsches Amt für Messwesen und Warenprüfung* (the German Office for Measurements and Goods Testing, the DAMW) as a branch of the Ministers’ Council, and the director Martin Kelm became the SED state secretary for product design (*Staatssekretär für Produktdesign*). In 1972, the Central Institute for Design became the

²⁸¹ Hirdina 53.

²⁸² *What is life like in the GDR?* 40.

State Office of Industrial Design (*Amt für industrielle Formgestaltung*); by a Ministers' Council law, passed in 1973, all factories had to hire industrial designers approved by the State Office of Industrial Design, headed by Dr. Martin Kelm.²⁸³

In order to assure quality control, the process of creation and production became highly centralized, making the process of design creation and production difficult. As explained by Kelm, the entire practice of industrial design was played out under the supervision of the party Central Committee through its various state design institutions. One of them was the powerful German Office for Measurements and Goods Testing (the DAMW), which functioned as an independent department of the Ministry of Technical Science, under the direct coordination of the SED and its leading bodies (Figure 10). The main function of DAMW was to oversee and administer current design processes in industry and to assure the quality of design²⁸⁴; it was the most influential design organism in terms of decision making because it was directly answerable to the SED's council. The DAMW was placed independently on a similar level of importance as the ministries. There was a complicated system of bodies, consisting of a network of party organs that influenced the process of industrial design. These included the Ministry of Industry, the DAMW, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry for Foreign Economic Affairs, and the Ministry for Higher and Specialized Education. The importance of *output* and *input* (these are the words, English rather than German, used in Figure 10) within the design process is related directly to the "development of the social system of socialism in the DDR" (*Entwicklung des gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus in der DDR*).

²⁸³ Rubin 354.

²⁸⁴ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 109-11.

The designers and their activity functioned within this highly structured political and economic system, following stipulated tasks and requirements in order to construct the “multi-developed communist society”. The Soviet-oriented economy served to create the communist society, and design was linked to its unitary vision and principles. As was shown in Chapter Two, industry and productivity were valued highly by the SED and considered main economic objectives in order to develop communist society. This is precisely why the ruling party prioritized and actively directed policies concerning industrial design. The guidelines in industry and domestic life were proclaimed by Walter Ulbricht (1950-1971), the secretary general of the communist party. The official vision of the state apparatus, in this way, dictated the understanding of design. Guided by state policy, the design field had certain ascribed attributes: mass production and reception, assured high quality, affordable and stable prices, and democratic decision making in terms of quantitative production of goods. Design became a tool for creating a standard communist lifestyle in accordance with the aims of the political apparatus. According to Kelm, “The chief task of the designer in a socialist society is ... to contribute to the development of the socialist lifestyle and of the socialist character.”²⁸⁵ Design itself became an important means of disseminating and reinforcing the communist party policy. Design under the communist system was praised as being superior to capitalist design in the writings of Martin Kelm who dedicated a large section of his above-mentioned seminal book to the comparison between socialist and capitalist design.²⁸⁶ Designers such

²⁸⁵ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 81.

²⁸⁶ Kelm, “Produktgestaltung unter sozialistischen und kapitalistischen Gesellschaftsverhältnissen,” *Produktgestaltung* 66-84.

as Martin Kelm even critiqued the capitalist economic system, which insisted on the primacy of profit margins at the expense of the people: “It is in the very nature of capitalism to keep the masses ignorant in order to manipulate their needs for the sale of goods.”²⁸⁷ The weak point of the capitalist system, according to socialist leaders and, therefore, designers, was the profit-oriented perspective on design (*Profitinteressen der Kapitalisten*) and the manipulation of people’s need (*manipulierte Bedürfnisse*) by overproduction.²⁸⁸

Hellerau Furniture Design

The case of the furniture design produced in Hellerau, near Dresden in the 1950s and 1960s, shows that the Bauhaus reception by several designers in respect to the official DDR line was not uniform. The official SED policy itself concerning the Bauhaus was manifest in the “formalist debate,” as discussed, first in a rejection and then an acceptance of the Bauhaus design style.

During the period when the DDR rejected the Bauhaus (1951-1964), as will be seen, some of the designers associated with Hellerau furniture design, such as Selman Selmanagić and Franz Ehrlich, tried to resist leading party rhetoric. They were, consequently, publicly criticized for their furniture design, which resembled the non-ornamented Bauhaus-related style. Paradoxically, starting in 1959, following communist state design politics, the socialist furniture produced in Hellerau was presented officially at the Leipzig fairs as a DDR industry success. The SED considered this as representative

²⁸⁷ Kelm, “*Produktgestaltung* 70.

²⁸⁸ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 78-9.

of DDR achievement because, according to the official press, it was well received in the Eastern bloc. This was very important because SED foreign trade policy was oriented towards high productivity and exports. It is important to note that the communist Hellerau furniture design and production factory functioned in a place imbued with tradition in respect to German furniture design. Like any other socialist manufacturer, the Hellerau studios were re-organized in 1951 as a state factory under the name of the *VEB Deutsche Werkstätten* (German Workshops of the People-Owned Factory), following the nationalization of *Deutsche Werkstätten AG*, which was a direct descendent of the nineteenth-century Hellerau furniture studios. Here, the *Machinenmöbel* (machine furniture) concept, combining machine made mass-produced furniture and hand-finishing had been developed at the turn of the nineteenth century by the architect and designer Richard Riemerschmidt.²⁸⁹ Riemerschmidt had promoted the idea of an inclusive approach to art following the Arts and Crafts' democratic approach.²⁹⁰

The DDR first phase of Hellerau furniture production within the communist years of its history developed in the context of the 1950s formalist debate (*Die Formalismusdebatte*) within the first Five Year Plan (1951-1955) economic strategy. It was seen as a period in which the Bauhaus name and design became associated by the SED with Western capitalism. In order to propagate this attitude, the SED organized in

²⁸⁹ In collaboration with his brother-in-law, the carpenter Karl Schmidt, Riemerschmidt marketed ensembles of furniture (that is, for living room, bedroom, and kitchen) in different sales categories. See Laurie A. Stein and Irmela Franze, "German Design and National Identity: 1890-1914," *Designing Modernity: The Arts of Reform and Persuasion, 1885-1945: Selections from the Wolfsonian*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1995) 68-70.

²⁹⁰ Joppien Rüdiger, "Germany: A New Culture of Things," in Kaplan, *The Arts & Crafts Movement* 102.

1953 the exhibition Better Life -- More Beautiful Living (*Besser leben - schöner wohnen*) extolling the qualities of traditional German furniture style and citing the Hellerau studios as a bad example of designing furniture without connection to Baroque or Renaissance German styles.²⁹¹ The criticized pieces of furniture were designed by two ex-Bauhäusler designers, Franz Ehrlich and Selman Selmanagić²⁹² (Figure 11). They had returned to the DDR in order to contribute to reconstructing the city of Dresden and chose to follow their Bauhaus formation against the SED.

Franz Ehrlich and Selman Selmanagić worked within the Hellerau furniture programme developing several noteworthy aspects. Most significant to the present study is the connection of their design with Bauhaus functionalism and with *Deutsche Werkbund* principles concerning standardization. Ehrlich and Selmanagić worked closely with workers and manufacturers. Nonetheless, Kurt Liebke, president of the East German Architectural Association and important SED member, paradoxically criticized them for working in an elitist manner, creating “an aristocracy of labour”

²⁹¹ Petra Gruner, “Neues Leben - Neues Wohnen,” *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996) 91.

²⁹² Both Ehrlich and Selmanagić studied at the Bauhaus and worked in the DDR as designers and architects; they had important public positions within the communist system. Selmanagić was born in the former Yugoslavia, and studied architecture and woodworking with Ludwig Hilbersheimer and Mies van der Rohe. In 1930 he became a member of the German Communist Party. He returned to the DDR, designed the Walter Ulbricht in Berlin (1950) and worked for the VEB Hellerau (1945-1976); he also designed many industrial buildings for the Five-Year Plan (1951-1955) and the Leipzig fairs. See Sonja Wüsten et al, *Selman Selmanagić*. Ehrlich worked with Hannes Meyer at the Bauhaus. For Ehrlich’s biography see Hirdina 373.

(*Arbeiteraristokratie*).²⁹³ Moreover, Liebknecht criticized the “pure functionalism” of the early Hellerau furniture, stating, “Function cannot be the single determining element in furniture design. They are building simple, cold, cubist furniture”²⁹⁴

The simple, non-ornamented, and functional pieces of furniture were designed for efficient fabrication. As an example, in 1957, Franz Ehrlich created individual pieces of furniture, including tables, cabinets, wardrobes (Figure 12 and Figure 13), that were based on a few simple design elements. Manufactured by the *VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau*, they were presented at the 1957 Leipzig Fair under the name “Individual furniture, type series 602” (*Einzelmöbel Typensatz 602*), in a variety of combinations for home, workplaces, bedrooms, and children’s bedrooms.²⁹⁵ Straight lines, drawers for storage, economy of materials, and a non-ornamented functional style evoked a new way of life for the socialist worker: efficient and simple, solid, and non-luxurious. The simple and functional furniture used veneer, available in several combinations of colours. To complete the domestic interior, Selman Selmanagić designed what has been described by an ex-editor of *form+zweck* as “a legend of seating furniture from Hellerau,”²⁹⁶ the *Armlehnsessel Modell 53693*, an easy chair with back and arm rests, manufactured in a

²⁹³ Marc Schweska and Markus Witte, “Revolution aus Tradition? Das Montagmöbelprogramme Deutsche Werstätten (MDW),” *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996) 82.

²⁹⁴ Schweska 91.

²⁹⁵ Hirdina 78.

²⁹⁶ See Günther Höhne, “GeWohntes. Interieur für Zuhause,” *Penti, Erika und Bebo Sher, Klassiker des DDR-Designs* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2001) 164. For an extensive overview of DDR design products see Günther Höhne, *Das Grosse Lexikon: DDR-Design* (Köln: Komet, 2008).

quantity of a quarter million pieces (Figure 14). This armchair, available in fabric upholstery in several colours, had a simple structure of wood veneer; the curved arms and wide seat assured comfortable seating. Hellerau furniture furnished the new DDR apartments; the furniture was available in several models and was distributed widely in the 1960s. Standardization was important for the SED. Domestic life in the DDR was, to a large degree, visually identified by a small number of models of furniture.

The official position towards this furniture changed abruptly in 1957. Criticized earlier by Liebkecht as being “formalist” and, therefore, “hostile to people,” it was seen in 1957 by Walter Ulbricht as being suited for the new Seven Year Plan: “We need a higher tempo of standardization and serialization ... the tempo of standardization must be brought in harmony with the tasks of the Seven Year Plan.”²⁹⁷ The people benefited collectively and in an egalitarian manner from the new socialist apartments and the consumer goods that were largely distributed through the *Handelsorganisation* (the Trade Organization, the HO) a nationally-owned, state-run organization of retail trade stores.²⁹⁸ The new modern apartments needed new modern design that could be provided, for example, by the Hellerau furniture. The development of communist Hellerau furniture design, then, was related to the 1960s mass-production strategy of housing and consumer goods to help improve citizens’ lives. Economically, it corresponded to the DDR Seven-

²⁹⁷ Quoted in Rubin 196.

²⁹⁸ Established in 1948, under the unofficial rule of Walter Ulbricht, this organization consisted of different departments (for example, department stores, industrial goods, and restaurants). For further details see Landsman, “The Contest Begins: The Currency Reform, the Berlin Blockade, and the Introduction of the HO” 38-73. In addition to the HO, there were other public organizations such as the Centrum department stores or the *Konsument-Versandhaus* (the Consumer Distributing House) that published consumer catalogues.

Year-Plan (1959-1965) meant to build the communist society. It was a period of mass-housing construction in the USSR; in the DDR, the period became known for its slogan *a home for everyone* (*Jedem eine Wohnung*) and has been characterized as a period when “industrialization and standardization were magic words for the socialist constructors.”²⁹⁹ Productivity was important and mass production helped to achieve the plan. Industrial design closely followed the new economic direction as stipulated by the SED.

A later phase of Hellerau furniture, in the 1960s, is related to designer Rudolf Horn, professor of furniture in Halle Burg Gebiechstein, in southern DDR. He developed the Furniture Programme of the German Workshops, *Das Möbelprogramm Deutsche Werkstätten* (the MDW, Figure 15). The basic concepts for this communist furniture were the high quality of industrial production and the modularity achieved through industrial standardization and mass production.³⁰⁰ The transition between the 1950s self-standing modular pieces of furniture and the wall furniture with many storage spaces can be seen in Ehrlich’s piece of MDW incorporated wall-shelves (Figure 16). Similar to the Hellerau furniture from the 1950s, the MDW project was highly promoted at official events.³⁰¹

A step forward for the MDW project was the *intecta* (this refers to a total, integral approach) furniture, which was composed from a set of furniture pieces and accessories to rationally decorate the entire home space including furniture for all rooms, ceramics,

²⁹⁹ Gruner 92.

³⁰⁰ Höhne 154.

³⁰¹ For its success at the 1967 Leipzig Fair and the appraisal of Walter Ulbricht see Marc Schweska and Markus Witte, “Revolution aus Tradition? Das Montagmöbelprogramme Deutsche Werstätten (MDW),” *Wunderwirtschaft: DDR-Konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996) 80-89.

glassware, lighting fixtures, and so forth. The Hellerau factory produced famous *intecta* furniture sets, especially the shelf-wall units designed by Rudolf Horn (*Schränkewände*) (Figure 17). These modular and rectangular pieces of furniture were made of pressed wood laminated with polyester resin. Derived from the MDW programme and foreshadowed by the living room furniture type Series 602, *intecta* sets were popularized and celebrated for the variety of possibilities they afforded³⁰² at state-sponsored 1970s fairs and party voice magazines. The design of *intecta* furniture was considered by SED as pure communist design and credited with elevating DDR life and culture.³⁰³ As Martin Kelm has noted in his important book on socialist product design, “The ‘intecta brand’ referring to the furnishing of the entire space shows a good start for socialist cooperation in the field of light industry and socialist trade.”³⁰⁴ By “socialist cooperation,” Kelm implied that the *intecta* programme had a close collaboration among socialist industries and a network of state distribution stores.³⁰⁵ The DDR-sponsored magazine *Kultur im Heim* (*Culture at Home*) and specialized fairs promoted an entire campaign to support the new Hellerau furniture and its modern qualities, considered appropriate for socialist

³⁰² See “‘intecta’ - Die Neueheit auf der Leipziger Herbstmesse,” *Kultur im Heim* 5 (1968): 3-9.

³⁰³ Looking at the *intecta* Hellerau furniture, one can notice an IKEA-like component in the idea of the entire space decoration. It is possible that professional ideas were exchanged through trade fairs, but there is no documented proof. This interesting aspect of design needs further research.

³⁰⁴ Kelm, *Produktgestaltung* 88.

³⁰⁵ Hirdina 160. The main material for fabrication was a resin; it should be noted that plastic was considered essential for the socialist industrial development within the context of the Soviet influence over the DDR programme *Chemie bringt Schönheit* (Chemistry creates beauty) developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

habitation. The DDR was one of the biggest Eastern European countries to manufacture and export furniture within the Eastern bloc. In 1956, for example, the DDR had 612 furniture factories.³⁰⁶ The popularity and success of the MDW furniture throughout the Eastern bloc was demonstrated only by official statistics showing the close connection to the Soviet economy and the “prestige” of East German modular furniture: “So far 14 million were delivered to the Soviet Union,” informed the press of the 1966 Leipzig Autumn Fair (*der Leipzig Herbstmesse*) referring to the number of units.³⁰⁷ It is difficult to evaluate the real demand on the socialist market because the availability of goods was state-controlled. The actual popularity and success, therefore, are difficult to verify, other statistics being unavailable.

Although the furniture design and production at Hellerau started in the early 1950s as a form of resistance against the SED rhetoric regarding the Bauhaus “formalism,” non-ornamented Hellerau furniture was finally accepted and it served, by all accounts, to significantly improve socialist living. It is important to note that the ex-Bauhaus designers Selmanagić and Ehrlich, who were criticized for their “formalist” approach and stayed true to their design, had important positions within the communist structure.

³⁰⁶ Andreas Ludwig, “‘Hunderte von Varianten’. Das Möbelprogramm Deutsche Werkstätten (MDW) in der DDR” *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, 3(2006). 17 September 2007 <<http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/site/40208716/default.aspx>>

³⁰⁷ Höhne, “GeWohntes” 154.

Conclusion

The Cold War debate concerning design was directly related to state politics and communist party policy in the DDR due to the high degree of control exercised over it and all aspects of cultural and economic life by the only ruling party. Design was intended to mold the “socialist personality.” Everyone one was intended to have egalitarian access to locally mass-produced goods. Design played a special role in society because design was considered an important tool to elevate quality of living. Socialist design was part of the centralized economic system and an essential part of the “cultural revolution.”

The creation and production process were controlled by the state through its design bodies. Important socialist designers such as Martin Kelm and Selman Selmanagić were educated in the egalitarian spirit of the Bauhaus and believed in the social dimension of design and mass production. Some of them headed significant decision-making bodies such as the DAMW.

The legacy of Mart Stam was strong and his students were educated in the Bauhaus spirit. Kelm became very powerful, being politically engaged and in control of design quality through the DAMW. Designers were state-employed in a state monopolistic non-competitive market and, therefore, design professionals were state-dependent in terms of market demand and need and in decision making for mass production.

The official communist state perspective on design addressed the mass production of daily goods in relation to industrial productivity from an economic point of view. The state referred to egalitarian consumption by the working class. Also, the communist

structure referred to state-guaranteed low prices and the high-quality of design. There was a coherent state vision that promoted design as a means of achieving a high-quality standard of living. The socialist state claimed to find solutions to solve people's problems and to improve their lives; these solutions were different from those promoted within a capitalist-based economy, even though both systems referred to themselves as "democratic" systems. In the case of the DDR, the SED influenced the aesthetic of the products and controlled the availability of products on the socialist market. The official design institutions and journals such as *form+zweck* promoted design according to SED ideology. Designers were required to function within the political and economic socialist system, engaging politically in order to have the possibility of decision making.

Designers had an uneasy relationship to the Bauhaus and the way it was perceived by the SED. In the early 1950s, the communist state critiqued Bauhaus formalism and called for a traditional component in German design. The Third Party Congress from 1951 criticized formalism which was associated with imperialism, and recommended a return to ornamented, traditional German styles. During this period Selmanagić and Ehrlich were criticized and yet nonetheless survived within the system, which finally accepted the Bauhaus-related style for economic reasons. As such, there were Bauhaus-educated designers who were able to negotiate their own ideas within the communist system.

Conclusion

Searching for human freedom, egalitarian treatment, and a better life for all people, many thinkers and different institutions combined the notion of “democracy,” as an abstract social construct, with the practice of design, as a purposeful social process. This research has investigated the human quest for “democratic design,” a quest that had its roots in the nineteenth century when socialist ideals began to emerge raising issues concerning the domestic life of all people. The core of this paper questioned meanings associated with the use of “democratic design” as a theoretical model; it also scrutinized the complexity of design theory and practice in two “democratic” systems from 1940 to early 1970s, which incorporates part of the Second World War and a large part of the Cold War framework: the American liberal capitalist structure and the East German communist one.

This thesis in design history addresses the idea that the notion of democratic design shares common features in a capitalist democratic system and in a communist one; they are differentiated by the underpinning political and economic ideology. Using historiographical questions and an historical (social, political, economic) approach to examine two examples of design represent the methodology applied here. Capitalist and communist democratic design are looked at globally, trying to integrate their approaches in the historical narrative of “democratic design.” While this research on “democratic design” is mainly theoretical, it is informed by an analysis of practice, looking at case studies (the plywood chairs made by the Eames in America, and the Hellerau furniture designed by Franz Ehrlich, Selman Selmanagić, and Rudolf Horn in East Germany).

Chapter One, “Mapping the Historical and Conceptual Field of Democratic Design,” traced the roots of the theoretical model of “democratic design.” The social inclusion-oriented aspect of design was discussed in Great Britain through the work of William Morris, a socialist thinker and initiator of the Arts and Crafts movement that was complex and manifested contradictions; he extolled the idea of art for all in the name of all people. The accessibility of goods with low prices for all people was one of Morris’s ideals. The notion of democracy was used in connection with design in order to indicate an egalitarian access to affordable goods. However, Morris’s attitude toward the machine, seen by him as evil and causing terrible conditions of life for poor industrial workers, and his praise of hand-crafted domestic objects increased the price of goods and made them unaffordable for the majority.

The acceptance of industrialization and the machine led Germany, imperial England’s economic rival, to officially support the principles of serial production and standardization. The *Deutsche Werkbund* was founded in 1907 to bring together design and industrial production, thus ensuring German industrial supremacy. Meanwhile, across the ocean, New World socio-economic activity generated a new “democratic” comprehension in relation to design: objects for the masses, goods for a large audience for everyday life. The American Arts and Crafts movement borrowed European ideas and developed them according to the rhetoric of the “free people who were building the American national identity.” Also, this was the place where concepts associated with mass production developed significantly due to the free entrepreneurial spirit of economic liberalism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Henry Ford revolutionized the field of industrial production. He obstinately insisted on producing

goods with low prices so that they were no longer a luxury for only a small number of people. Yet, development of the phenomenon of mass production in the case of Ford was not entirely free from profit-driven motives. His far-reaching idea of serialized manufacturing found a good home back in Europe. In the 1920s, the influential director of the German Bauhaus school of design, Walter Gropius, who knew about Fordism, preached the principle of mass production closely bound to industrial design to serve the needs of the people according to the necessities of a new life. It is the modern industrial nature of design that made possible its “democratic” features: mass production, quality of execution, low prices, and accessibility to the masses of the people. In parallel, in Eastern and Northern Europe, states such as the socialist republic of the Soviet Union and the parliamentary monarchy of Sweden both reinforced the notion of democratization understood as egalitarian opportunities for their citizens.

The uneasy relationship between West and East was promoted and enhanced in the domain of design history by the British creation of a Western-centred influential canon of modern design by Nikolaus Pevsner in the 1930s. While addressing the history of modern design before 1914, Pevsner’s model excluded Eastern and Northern European histories of design; this Western-centred model remained in use long after the Second World War and informed the period investigated in this thesis. This canon of design history, based on economic power and the rhetoric of European imperial power, was continued after the Second World War. At the beginning of the Cold War, the ideological fight engulfed the realm of design and West and Eastern Europe were isolated again because of state politics. As we have seen, “democratic design” was understood generically as good-quality, low-priced, mass-produced design accessible to all people. It

is a non-monosemious construct, however, varying in accordance with social organization and political structure (for example, imperial monarchy, liberal democracy, communist dictatorship), and economic interests.

Chapter 2, “Design, Democracy, and Opposing Politico-Economic Systems,” discussed the relationship between design and democracy, explaining what democracy means in each system, that of the American capitalist “liberal democracy” or of the East German communist “socialist democracy,” within the context of the Cold War. Design was strongly related to the idea of economic prosperity, which was differently understood in both systems: the capitalist economy was profit- and consumption-driven in a private competitive market where consumption was encouraged by national policy; the communist socialist economy was production-oriented in a public, state-controlled market where productivity was encouraged by political doctrine. A liberal economy, free of state control and supervision, as well as the idea of economic growth encouraging consumption, were extolled by the American government, while a centralized planned economy, based on Five-Year or Seven-Year Plans, was praised by the ruling communist party, which emphasized the basic needs of the people. In this equation, both “democratic” states engaged in an ideological race.

The notion of class was important in the post-Second World War period. The notion of an American middle class, characterized by a medium income earned by the white male as the provider of the suburban family and imbued with ideals of “real democracy” and a “good” domestic life, presented as an ideological weapon against the Cold War enemy. The daily life of the average free citizen was connected with the notion of a middle class that was capable of choosing a comfortable life due to a certain income

and the broad availability of various products on the market. The United States Information Agency (USIA) called this practice “the people’s capitalism.” Within East Germany, the notion of class was related to the communist proletariat or the working class who owned collectively the means of production but who were allowed to acquire only a limited number of goods (here, the idea of individual wealth and separation of society into poor and rich were highly criticized). This economic system was dedicated to the people and belonged to the people -- the “people’s economy.” Two other social classes developed within a communist society, that was full of contradictions, but they were not recognized in official papers: the *nomenklatura* (comprised of political leaders, an elitist ruling class) and the intelligentsia. The communist citizens worked hard to build what the communist party claimed to be the “multi-developed communist society.” In the 1950s, however, communist citizens started to question the legitimacy of the system when they experienced scarcity and control over ordinary goods; therefore, they looked longingly at Western goods. The capitalist consumption of goods was seen by East German citizens as opposed to the scarcity of goods existing in the communist society. It is difficult to trace the perspective of the American consumer on East German products; I found little evidence that this interest was reciprocal.

Chapter Three, “American Policy, Design, and the Role of Charles and Ray Eames: A Case Study of Capitalist Democratic Design,” focused on the notion of democratic design in America, especially as it developed during the Cold War. Economic growth, oriented towards mass production, and high consumption were the result of the Roosevelt strategy from the 1940s, with the intention of assuring U.S. economic independence and a mass-housing programme for war veterans. In this context, many

industrial designers used styling to increase sales and promoted the notion of planned obsolescence (for example, the profit-driven philosophy of Raymond Loewy). There were many ways to conceive design in the American society of those times and democratic design, as embodied in the Eames philosophy, oriented towards availability and affordability of goods, was only one of them.

An important policy maker, one that propelled the notion of “modern design” in general and the Eames design in particular in America in the 1950s, was the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A special Department of Industrial Design was created in 1946 at the MOMA, and its director, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., collaborated with businessmen and manufacturers to promote “modern design” by organizing design competitions and exhibitions, promoted consistently in connection with ideas of American democracy. As such, the MOMA extolled, through educative publications, competitions, and exhibitions, the “precepts” of modern design in a “real democracy” in which the notion of the average free individual was central. Also, MOMA republished Pevsner’s influential book, reinforcing the authority of a Western model of design history.

This represents the wider context in which Charles and Ray Eames, designers established in California in 1941, became famous and started working with the furniture manufacturer Herman Miller. Charles and Ray Eames met at the Cranbrook Academy where some of the principles of the Arts and Crafts and of the Bauhaus curriculum were applied; there, they worked with the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen. Herman Miller decided to produce pieces of furniture made by the Eames, most of which would win awards at MOMA-organized design competitions in New York, such as the International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design in 1948. At this competition, the Eames

expressed their design philosophy with chairs that could be mass produced, that were intended to have low prices and be of good quality, and were destined for the masses.

One of the most successful chairs designed by the Eames, the Lounge Chair Metal (LCM, 1946) -- a chair made of plywood after many experiments, produced using a mold made by the Eames in their own house -- was created without a commission from a manufacturer. This is important because it shows that it was designer-driven design that managed to meet people's needs. The chair was designed simply because the Eames believed in the necessity of a new chair design, made of industrially produced molded plywood and standardized elements, that they thought appropriate for the new postwar American way of life within a rejuvenated economy. As such, the technology and the phase of working with their hands when creating prototypes were both extremely important. They were independent designers who had contracts with many clients, including the furniture manufacturer Herman Miller; they also worked with the American government albeit in the domain of information design rather than furniture design. The Eames's democratic design philosophy, non profit-centred and human-need-oriented, was one of the independent design choices within the capitalist system. While, there were two distinct phases of creation in their career, they always preserved the idea that their work should reach as many people as possible.

Chapter Four, "Design in East Germany, Soviet Policy, and the Hellerau Furniture: A Case Study of Communist Democratic Design," addressed the understanding of democratic design in communist East Germany. Soviet influence was present at all levels of political, social, and economic structure, reinforcing the politics of a single ruling entity, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (the SED), that concentrated

all power at a centralized level and in the hands of one person, the SED secretary general, Walter Ulbricht (1950-1971). There was one traceable vision of “democratic design” in the DDR; the SED promoted a single vision of design, a vision that corresponded to a democratic life for all citizens (that is, the working class) of the communist society. According to the SED political and economical tasks, industrial productivity was extremely important in the construction of communist society. Therefore, industrial design was considered a powerful tool of cultural politics, one that could be used to educate the communist citizen. The task of the designer, as Dr. Martin Kelm, one of the most powerful designers in terms of decision making and a politically-engaged design professional, wrote in many of his theoretical papers, was to help develop the socialist state and the “socialist personality.” The notion of design connected to democracy emphasized this idea of egalitarian participation in industrial production and consumption. The communist state claimed that socialist design should be made for all people. High-quality design production was perceived as a quality specific to socialist design in opposition to “imperialistic” Western design, which it felt concentrated on consumption, profit, and manipulation of the masses.

Designers were dependent on state employment and on the manufacturers (the VEB) that were also state-owned factories. The economy was centralized and planned according to the five or seven years plans based on economic prognoses made by the SED. Consequently, quantity and quality and the kinds of products to be designed and manufactured were strongly controlled by the SED through a bureaucratic hierarchical system and the German Office for Measurements and Goods Testing (the DAMW) as a branch of the Ministers’ Council.

Yet, surprisingly, there was a complexity of Eastern German design practice in spite of the SED unitary vision on design. By 1950, there was a diversity of design practice due to the strong history of industrial design in Germany, including the Bauhaus tradition strongly represented through ex-Bauhaus members who returned to work in the German Democratic Republic. Ideologically charged with Cold War rhetoric during the early 1950s, the SED considered the non-ornamented Bauhaus aesthetic to be “hostile to the people.” In 1951, the party called for a revival of German historical styles (that is, Baroque, Rococo, Biedermeier). This appeal to the popular national roots of the German people was a method of creating a new socialist identity in contrast to the Western Bauhaus functionalism. The debate continued but, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, due to economic difficulties and the Soviet call for inexpensive and quick mass-housing construction, the Bauhaus was slowly rehabilitated. This rejection-acceptance relationship with one aspect of past design practice was visible in particular in the case of the Hellerau furniture from the 1950s. Situated near Dresden, the Hellerau workshops were created in the nineteenth century by Riemerschmidt, who applied his democratic approach to machine-made pieces of furniture, made for all people. Here, during the communist regime (1945-1989), Bauhaus-educated designers such as Franz Ehrlich and Selman Selmanagić created standardized types of living room furniture that were criticized by Kurt Liebkecht, SED member and president of the *Deutschen Bauakademie* (the East German Architectural Association) as being “simple, cold, cubist.” By 1963, however, Walter Ulbricht, SED secretary general, would praise them and they were produced and distributed throughout the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union market.

Developing from Ehrlich's and Selmanagić's pieces, the Furniture Programme of the German Workshops project (*Das Möbelprogramm Deutsche Werkstätten*, MDW) at Hellerau was a project that reinforced the ideas of mass production, modularity, and standardization. It was developed in the 1960s by the designer Rudolf Horn. This was known as the *intecta* programme (the total, integral decoration of the home space with furniture) that was highly valued by party leaders as "true socialist design." The idea was to create an environment -- that is, an entire interior decoration programme for an apartment with furniture, lighting fixtures, glassware, and so forth; this implied a close collaboration and dependence of all state-controlled industrial branches of design.

Communist design was ideologically imbued with the notion of "democracy": mass-produced goods intended for all working people; wares that were allegedly of high-quality; and prices that were low because they were state controlled and guaranteed. Design professionals who were capable of making decisions had public functions within the political system; they had to support the communist ideology and tried to create according to the "socialist need" of the "socialist personality." Design itself was considered by Walter Ulbricht an important element of the "socialist cultural revolution."

As we have seen, the historical crux of democratic design brings together two nineteenth-century realms: social theory imbued with Marxist ideas and industrialization (new technologies, machine-production, and standardization). The narrative of "democratic design" was related to the preoccupation with making art available for all people; it was related to industrial modernity and socialist ideas regarding the wide accessibility of ordinary goods for the masses. This investigation indicated clearly that design and democracy are two uneasy fellows that were put together in different socio-

political and economic circumstances; their meanings were defined according to political interests, economic relevance, and geo-political issues; the understanding of democratic design (affordable good quality design for all) varied as the concept of democracy changed in respect to time and geographical location.

There are two related aspects of the notion of democratic design: one assigned by the state, which connects the notion of democratic design to issues of power, economic supremacy, and national welfare; the other refers to the democratic approach of design as understood by socialist thinkers, design institutions and, in certain cases, design professionals. An important difference between the theory and practice of “democratic design” has been noted throughout this discussion. The theoretical meaning of democracy applied to design, therefore, addressed the concept of freedom for all, benefiting from equal opportunities to access designed goods in a society that is ruled by the people. Democratic design does exclude the minority of the poor and of well-off members (that is, the rich in America and the *nomenklatura* in the DDR) of the social structure ruled by the majority. In this case, the notions of availability and affordability are crucial. The notion of democratic design in a communist system does include, in theory, the idea of egalitarian, uniform access to uniformed goods produced by the authoritarian state, which is theoretically ruled by all of its members; but in practice, the state, represented by a party minority, controls the availability of choices through the availability of goods distribution on the communist market.

Generally, it is significant to note how the comprehensive notion of majority, as revealed by the practical representation of “democracy” excludes the minority. The notion of democratic design shows an exclusionist aspect in both capitalist and

communist systems, most notably, in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity and social class (for example, the poor in America); this is particularly evident in relation to the reception of design within a capitalist system (for example, goods were destined to white middle class families) and the production of design within a communist system (for example, male designers were preferred). The way the notion of “people” is spoken of in relation to design and democracy varies widely: all people (William Morris within the British Empire), the middle class (the German *Werkbund* and Muthesius; the American version of Arts and Crafts), the consumer (the entrepreneur Ford), everyone (Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus), all classes (the Nazi regime), the people and the working class (the socialist Soviet Union), a wide non-elite market and all people (Sweden), the masses (Estonia), middle class and the consumer (postwar America), and the working class (the communist DDR). The inclusive idea of “all” in the Western context has evolved to include various groups. The ideological construct of the working class in the communist context refers to all the people within the state, implying that the communist society would have one only working class with no differences among its individuals; as such, it strives towards the Marxist classless communist society.

In the period from the 1950s-1970s, “democratic design” was an ideologically-centred construct within the post-Second World War framework. In other words, neither Western designers and receivers nor Eastern ones were given true ideology-free information about the other. Each “democracy,” either liberal capitalism or communist socialism, looked at the foe-like otherness within the context of the rhetoric of the Cold War. Moreover, they used Cold War rhetoric to help create a sense of difference (and superiority) with and through their respective forms of design.

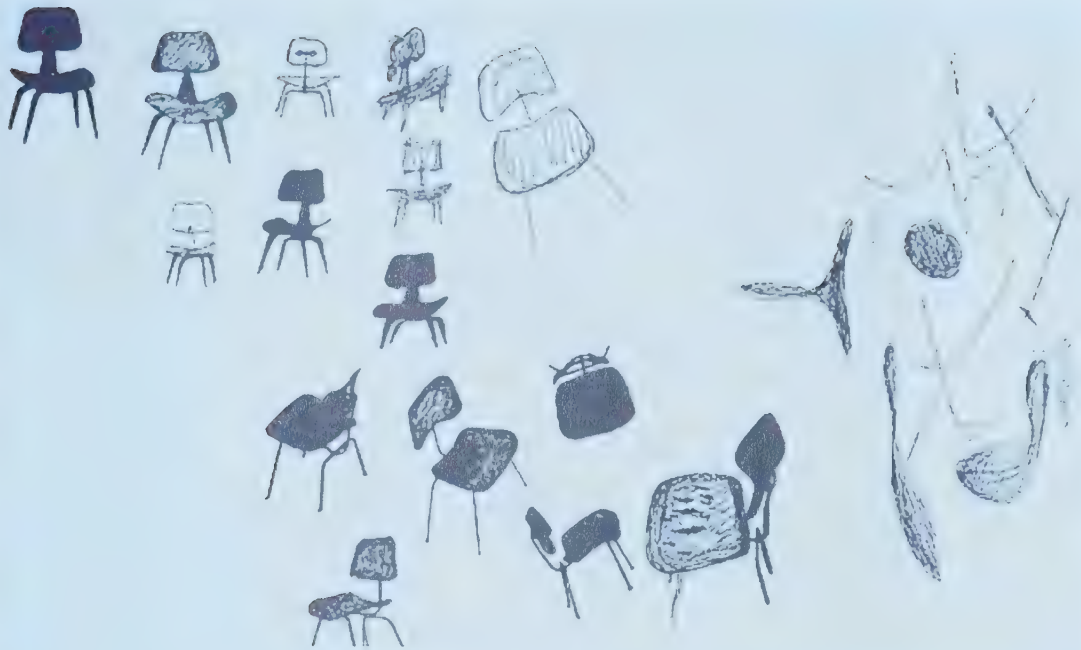
In order to achieve the party objectives within the DDR, design was industrially mass produced, the quality was claimed to be high, the prices were stable and state controlled, the masses of workers were the receivers of the goods; designers were employed by the state, and manufacturers operated on a centralized non-competitive market. The SED was the decision maker in the case of design. In the early 1960s, however, some tensions arose between the SED policy and ex-Bauhaus designers that created Hellerau furniture. The state was the commissioner, the provider of materials, the producer, and the distributor according to the communist political strategy and hierarchical structure. The structural analysis of design's position vis-à-vis the overall state apparatus, while unwieldy, is essential to a clear understanding of "democratic design" in the East German communist system. This rigid framework, confining design, did not appear within the capitalist American system.

The democratic approach to design shown by the American government encouraged mass production and helped to mold the middle class as the consumer; the MOMA and private manufacturers acted in favour of mass production, low cost, quality wares for the masses consisting of middle-class citizens. Charles and Ray Eames joined some of the MOMA activities, believing in democratic design as a means of practical problem-solving for the masses, and they collaborated greatly with private manufacturers who shared their vision. The individual designer, in this case the Eames, had a much greater degree of control over the kind of design objects produced in the system. The notion of democratic design shared theoretical features in both systems but the economic and socio-political context in which the different variations of "democratic design" were conceived resulted in different practical outcomes.

Before the Second World War, the Pevsnerian canonical model of modern design disregarded much design including that made in the Soviet Union. The influence of this model persisted even after the War, partly because of Iron Curtain opacity and Cold War segregationist discourse. Eastern European socialist design currently is situated uncomfortably in relation to the Western model, even in light of the concept of the European Union. The history of communist design has not been written yet, nor has the larger history that integrates it within the wider picture. The narrative of Pevsnerian modern design needs to be deconstructed and rewritten, as this research has aimed in a modest way to do, in order to “democratically” make room for all design histories in the complicated world of design.



Figure 1 Lounge Chair Metal (LCM), 1946, the Museum of Modern Art, Architecture and Design Collection; designer: Charles and Ray Eames; manufacturer: Herman Miller Furniture Company.
www.artstor.com



4928

Figure 2 Plywood chairs, sketches of various views; Ray Eames, between 1945 and 1950.
www.artstor.com



Figure 3 Chair made of molded plywood, wood, foam rubber, and fabric; designers: Charles and Ray Eames and Eero Saarinen for the Organic Design in Home Furnishings competition (1940), courtesy of Vitra Design Museum; www.eamesoffice.com



Figure 4 Lounge Chair Prototype, molded plywood, 1945; designers: Charles and Ray Eames.

www.eamesoffice.com



Figure 5 Dining Armchair Rod (DAR), fiberglass-reinforced polyester, steel rod, rubber shockmounts, and plastic glides, 1950; designers: Charles and Ray Eames. Museum of Modern Art in New York.
www.artstor.com



Figure 6 Presentation board for the 1948 International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture, Museum of Modern Art; designer: The Eames Design Team.
www.eamesoffice.com

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Figure 7 Herman Miller postcard for the Eames Sofa Compact, 1954.
www.eamesoffice.com










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STREET ADDRESS		STREET ADDRESS		CITY							
STATE		STATE		CITY							
ZIP CODE		ZIP CODE		TELEPHONE NO.							
PURCHASE FROM STOCK OR AN OPEN ACCOUNT? (PLEASE CHECK)		ALL UNITS ARE SHIPPED F.O.B. FACTORY		TRANSPORTATION CHARGES COLLECTIBLE							
ENCLOSURE		ALL IN-TRANSIT CLAIMS MUST BE FILED IMMEDIATELY AGAINST CARRIER									
ITEM NO.		QUANTITY					PRICE EACH		TOTAL		
 DCW DINING CHAIR METAL LEGS SEAT HT. 18"							18	50			
 DCW DINING CHAIR WOOD LEGS SEAT HT. 17 1/2"							20	15			
 LCM LOW CHAIR METAL LEGS SEAT HT. 15 1/2"							19	20			
 LCW LOW CHAIR WOOD LEGS SEAT HT. 15 1/2"							20	95			
 CTM DINING TABLE METAL LEGS 34" x 15"							20	50			
 CTM DINING TABLE WOOD LEGS 34" x 15"							16	85			
 CTW COFFEE TABLE WOOD LEGS		METAL LEGS - 17 1/2" x 15" x 15"					26	75			
		WOOD LEGS - 17 1/2" x 15" x 15"					18	75			
		METAL LEGS - 17 1/2" x 15" x 15"					18	75			
 FSW FOLDING SCREEN WOOD EACH PANEL 10" WIDE		FSW6						41	75		
		FSW8						55	75		
		FSW10						69	75		
 FSW FOLDING SCREEN WOOD EACH PANEL 10" WIDE		34 FSW6						23	75		
		34 FSW8						29	75		
		34 FSW10						36	75		
TERMS: 2% 15 DAYS NET 30 DAYS		TOTAL									
		DEDUCT 2% DISCOUNT IF CHECK IS ENCLOSED									
		AMOUNT OF CHECK									

Figure 9 Herman Miller price list for the Eames designs, 1951.
www.eamesoffice.com

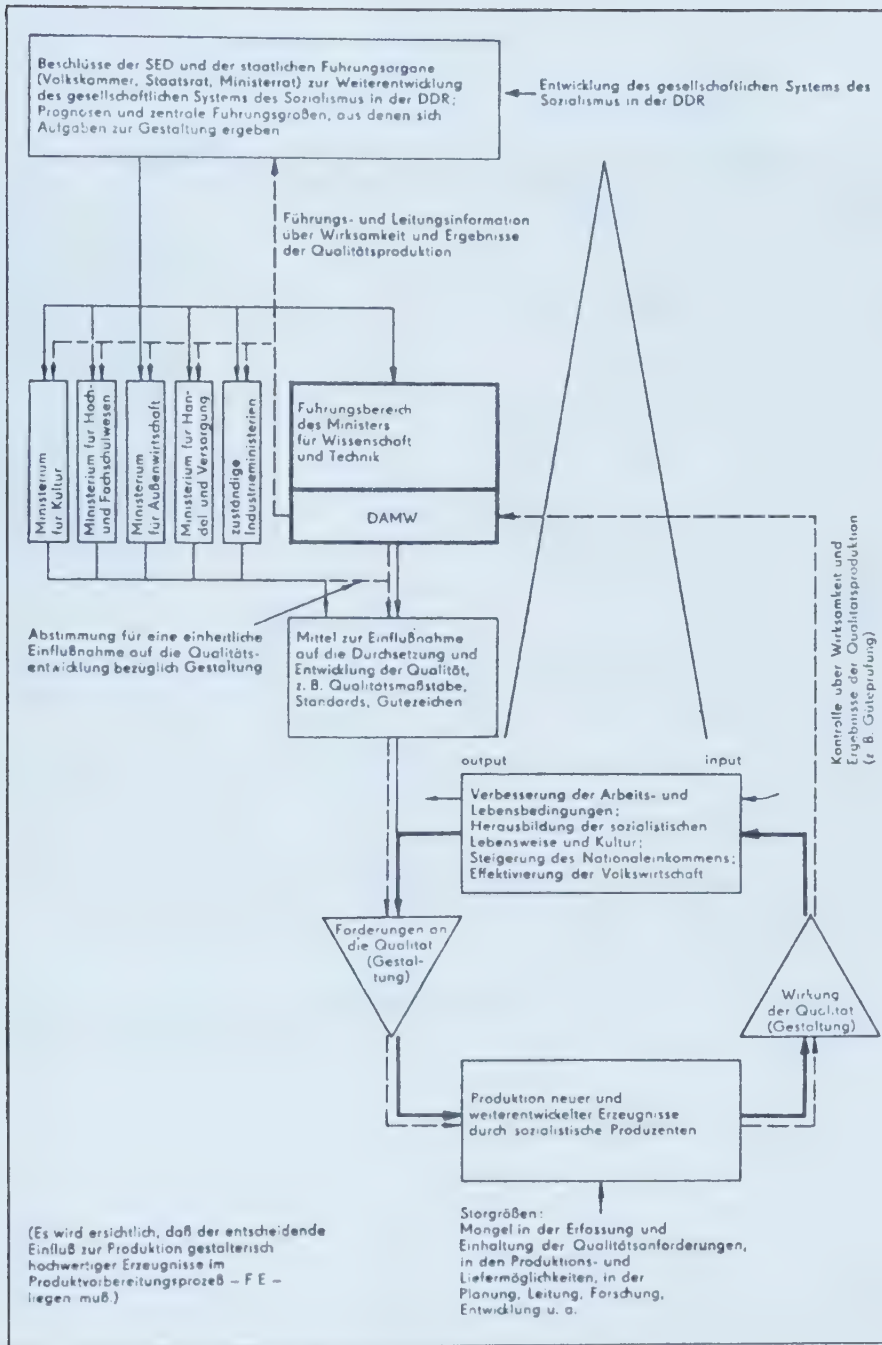


Figure 10 The scheme of the influence of the socialist East German state institutions upon the development and enforcement of design quality. The DAMW (German Office for Measurements and Goods Testing) was subordinated directly to the Ministers' Council. Martin Kelm, *Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1971) 106.

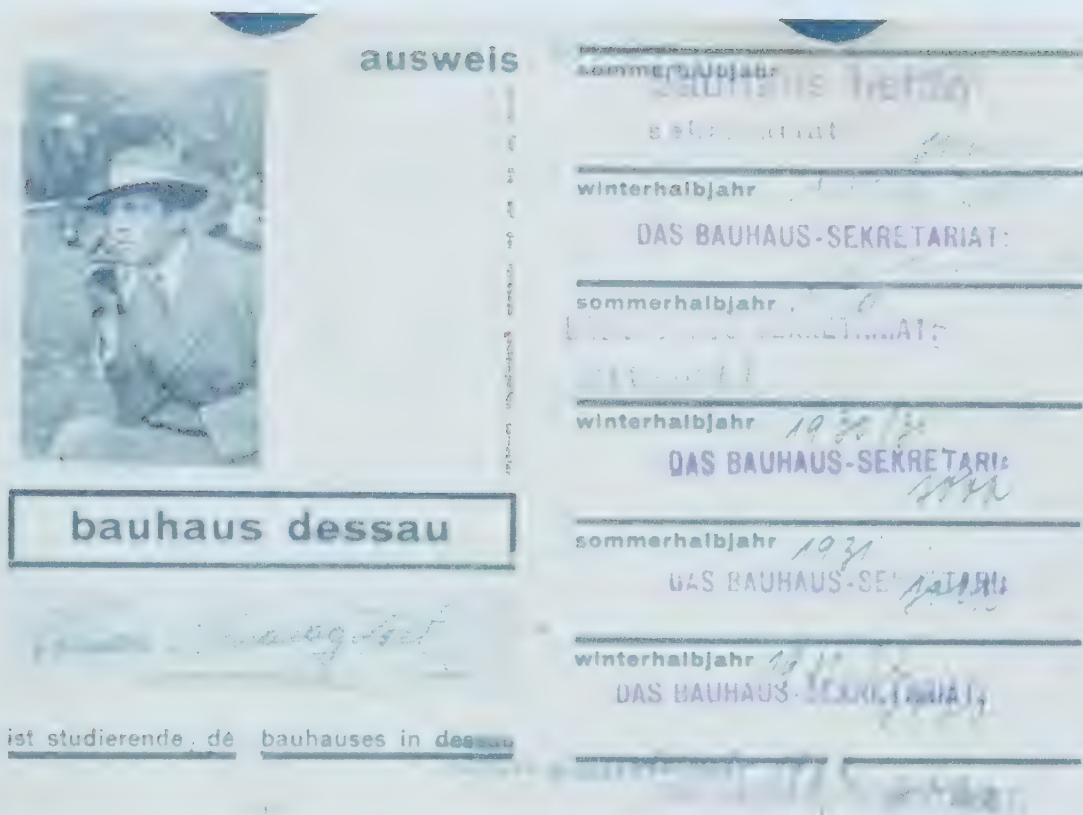


Figure 11 Selman Selmanagić's Bauhaus student card; Archiv Selmanagić.
www.aujourd-hui.de



Figure 12 Module of living room furniture, type series 602, 1957; designer Franz Ehrlich; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau.

Documentationszentrum Alltagskulture der DDR, Eisenhüttenstadt (the Documentation Center for Material Culture in the GDR), rpt. in Andreas Ludwig, “‘Hunderte von Varianten’. Das Möbelprogramm Deutsche Werkstätten (MDW) in der DDR” *Zeithistorische Forschungen* Online-Ausgabe 3 (2006).



Figure 13 Modular furniture, type series 602, 1957; designer: Franz Ehrlich; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau.

Chair with back and arm rests, Model 53693 (*Armlehnsessel Modell 53693*), 1957; designer: Selman Selamangić; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten in Hellerau.

form+zweck 3 (1986)



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Figure 14 Armchair (Modell 53693), 1957; designer: Selman Selmanagić; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau.
www.deutschefotothek.de



Figure 15 Advertising for the new furniture series produced by the VEB Deutsche Werkstätten in Hellerau, 1967.

Kultur im Heim (1967): 3



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Figure 16 Meeting room (Sitzungszimmer), 1960 (?); designer: Franz Ehrlich; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau.
www.deutschefotothek.de



Figure 17 *intecta* concept with shelf-wall units (*Schränkewände*), 1967; designer: Rudolf Horn; manufacturer: VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau.
www.deutschefotothek.de

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Appendix 1

Historical overview of design-related institutions in East Germany (1946-1976)*

1946 Reopening of the College of Architecture and Fine Arts in Weimar (*die Hochschule für Baukunst und Bildende Künste in Weimar*).

1948 Mart Stam becomes head of the College of Arts and Crafts in Dresden.

1950 The Institute for Industrial Design (*die Institut für Industrielle Gestaltung*) in Berlin-Weißensee, incorporated into the University of Berlin, is founded and run by Mart Stam.

1951 The Third SED Party Assembly calls for a return to traditional German art; the SED begins the fight against formalism (the “formalist debate”)

1951 The Institute for Interior Design within the College of Architecture in Weimar is founded by Michael Horst.

1952 The Institute for Industrial Design in East Berlin is renamed the Institute for Applied Arts (*die Institut für Angewandte Kunst, IFAK*) and separated from the university.

1953 Mart Stam leaves East Germany and moves to Amsterdam

1957 The first issue of the East German journal for industrial design *form+zweck* is published in Berlin-Weißensee.

1958 The School for Industrial Design in Halle-Burg Giebichenstein (*die Hochschule für industrielle Formgestaltung in Halle-Burg Giebichenstein*) is opened.

1963 The Central Institute for Design (*die Zentralinstitut für Formgestaltung*) is created as part of the Ministry of Culture under the direction of Martin Kelm; it was the first official state institution dedicated to industrial design.

1964 The end of the “formalist debate”; the rehabilitation of the Bauhaus.

1965 The Central Institute for Design is placed under the control of the German Office for Measurements and Goods Testing (*das Deutsches Amt für Messwesen und Warenprüfung, das DAMW*) as a branch of the Ministers’ Council; the director Martin Kelm becomes the SED State Secretary for product design (*Staatssekretär für Produktdesign*); the DAMW was responsible for inspecting the quality of industrial production in the DDR.

1972 The State Office of Industrial Design (*Amt für industrielle Formgestaltung*) is the new name of the Central Institute for Design; by a Ministers’ Council law, passed in 1973, all factories had to hire industrial designers approved by the State Office of Industrial Design headed by Dr. Martin Kelm.

1976 The Bauhaus Dessau Scientific and Cultural Centre is founded.

* The following sources were used to organize this overview: Georg-Christof Bertsch, “The Historical Perspective,” *SED - Schönes Einheits Design. Stunning Eastern Design. Savoir Eviter Le Design*, Georg Bertsch, Ernest Hedler and Matthias Dietz (Köln: Taschen, 1990)17-33; Heinz Hirdina, *Gestalten für die Serie: Design in der DDR 1949-1985* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1988); Eli Rubin, “The Form of Socialism without Ornament,” *Journal of Design History* 19.2 (2006): 155-68; Ralf Ulrich, *DDR Design - East German Design - Design de la RDA 1949-1989* (Köln: Taschen, 2004).

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